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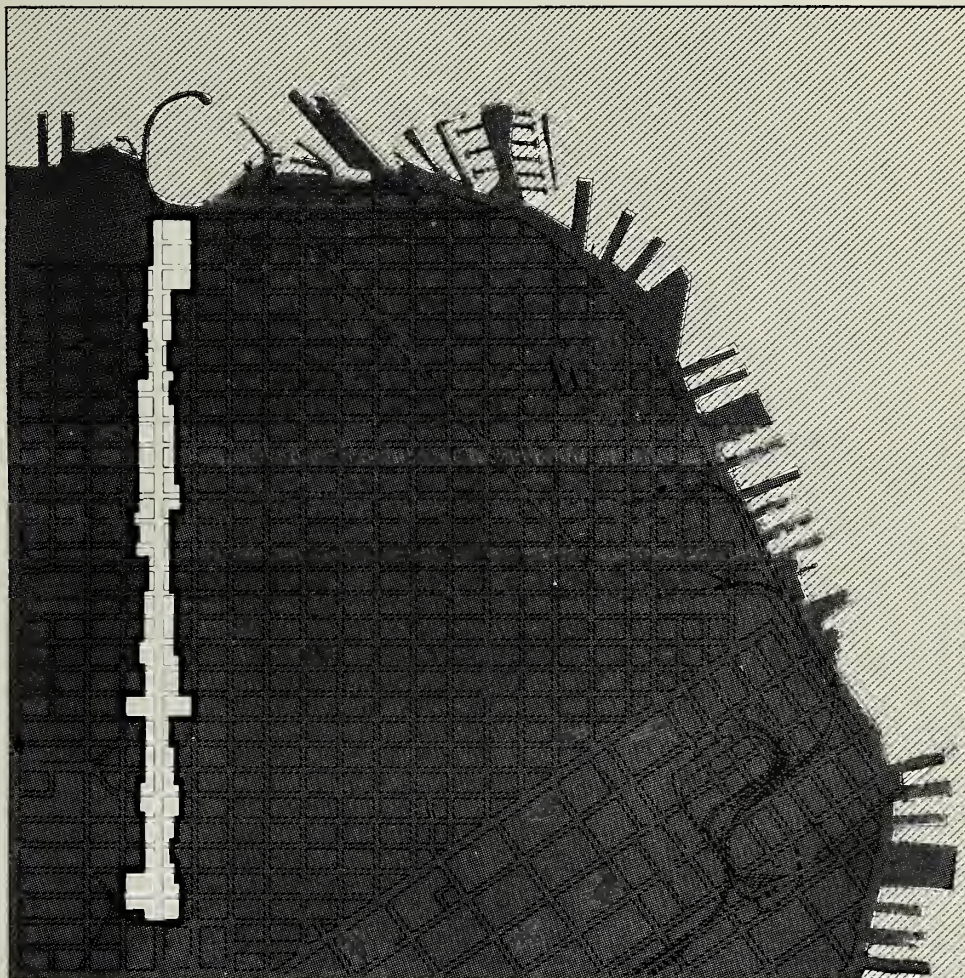
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## PROPOSAL FOR ADOPTION

SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

OCTOBER 1986

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# VAN NESS PLAN

## PROPOSAL FOR ADOPTION

San Francisco Department of City Planning  
City and County of San Francisco

October 1986





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## I. INTRODUCTION

San Francisco today is faced with a critical housing shortage. Although some infill housing is possible in the City's lower density residential areas, medium- or high-density housing development can take place only in a very few areas within the City where such development does not critically disturb the existing residential fabric. Such areas are in short supply in San Francisco; they have become very important "housing opportunity sites" and carry most of the City's potential for the provision of a significant number of new housing units.

The Van Ness Avenue Corridor is one of these housing opportunity sites. This plan envisions future development of Van Ness Avenue as a major residential boulevard with mixed-use development stepped back to preserve light and air. It seeks to incorporate a set of land use and urban design guidelines which would facilitate the development of an attractive and predominantly residential environment along Van Ness Avenue.

The Plan for Van Ness Avenue is designed to achieve four goals:

- **Provide More Housing**

High density residential development is encouraged in the context of new mixed use (residential and commercial) projects along Van Ness Avenue. Such mixed use development ideally would be a combination of attractive and pedestrian-oriented retail shops and restaurants on the lower floors and residential development on the upper floors. The lower-level commercial activity would thus serve as a buffer between upper level residential space and the more active street level activities.

Assuming that underdeveloped sites between Mcallister Street and Bay Street were to be developed under this Plan within the next 10 to 15 years and the average unit size were to be about 800 square feet, over 2,000 new housing units could be provided.

- **Encourage a Coherent Street Wall Along Van Ness Avenue**

New development should create a coherent street wall along the Avenue by building to the front property line and the allowable height. Nevertheless, the scale of new buildings – their height, bulk, shape and proportions – should not overwhelm buildings of historic and architectural significance. Designs should harmonize with those buildings by continuing compositional features such as horizontal lines (i.e., belt courses, cornices), window proportions, and overall facade divisions. Strong articulation of building bases with setbacks along Van Ness Avenue at the five to eight story level and building heights up to 130 feet would provide an urban form which would adequately respond to the prevalent height of architecturally significant buildings as well as the great width of the Avenue itself.

At the same time, new development should be sensitive to the streetscape along the east-west side streets intersecting Van Ness Avenue. These streets range from small alleyways to major arteries like Pine and California Streets. View corridors along major streets should be protected and the scale and design character of the smaller alleyways should not be overwhelmed.

- **Save Significant Buildings**

Retention of architecturally significant buildings contributes both to the design of newer buildings and the overall appearance of the Avenue. Preservation of these buildings will be encouraged through possible exemption of designated city landmark buildings from certain land use requirements of the Van Ness Plan.

- **Improve Pedestrian Environment**

Although Van Ness Avenue is a major thoroughfare, its pedestrian environment can be greatly improved with tree plantings along the length of the Avenue, preservation of sunlight on the sidewalks, attractive street furniture, and strong articulation of building facades. The ground floor levels of new developments ideally should contain retail shops and restaurants; Van Ness Avenue's current renaissance as an attractive retail location should be strengthened and further encouraged.

The Plan for Van Ness Avenue subdivides the Avenue into three discrete subareas which share common resources and characteristics. Subarea One, from McAllister Street to Broadway, is appropriate for major new development while Subarea Two, from Broadway to Beach Street, is more appropriate for conservation with carefully designed infill development. Subarea Three, located at the northern end of Van Ness Avenue, is considered an important open space resource and should be improved with landscaping.

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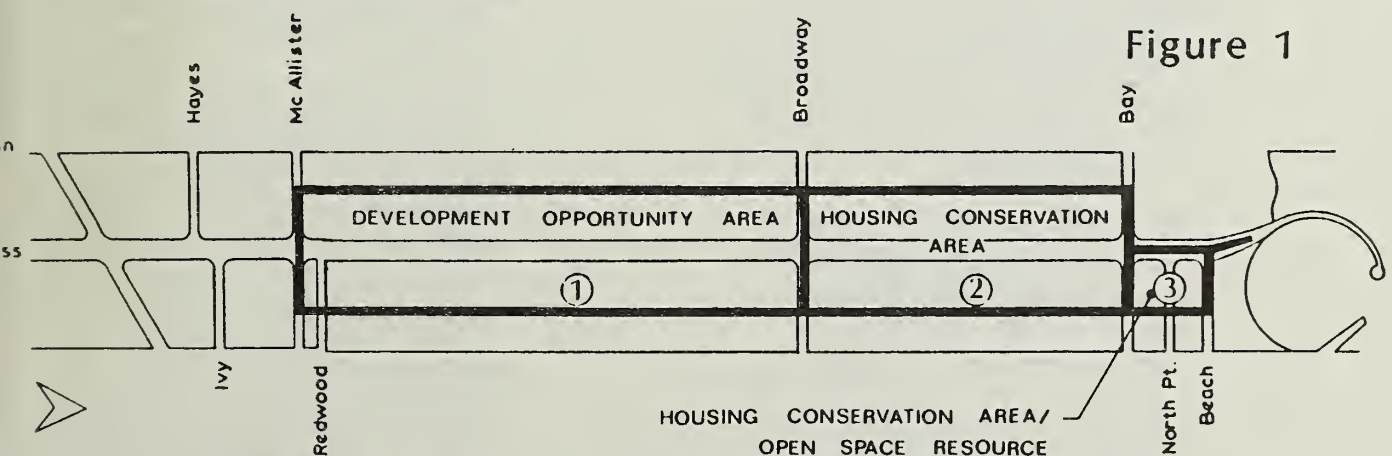


## II. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Plan divides the Avenue into three subareas. The Plan's proposed regulations are summarized below:

### GENERAL

1. A Van Ness Avenue Special Use District would be established for the area designated in this Plan as Subarea 1. The existing Automotive Special Use District would be repealed.
2. Preservation of architecturally significant buildings would be carefully monitored. If on-site provision of the required housing is proven infeasible, conversion of existing commercial spaces within buildings classified as city landmarks could be exempted from residential use requirements with conditional use authorization.
3. Conservation of existing rental housing is encouraged throughout the Van Ness Plan area wherever possible. Any demolition or conversion of existing housing would require Conditional Use authorization. In its consideration of the conditional use application, the Planning Commission would take into consideration the housing preservation objectives of this Plan, the Residential Element of the Comprehensive Plan, and any applicable City-wide regulations pertaining to the demolition of housing.
4. To give continuity to the street, a uniform landscape/greenspace plan, incorporating tree plantings, decorative sidewalk treatments and improved street furniture would be carried out by the City in the near future along the entire length of the Avenue. Decorative paving and additional landscaping in the median strip would be installed.
5. Existing height limits within the Van Ness Area area would be maintained except for the area between California and Pacific Streets, where the existing 130 ft. and 105 ft. limits would be reduced to 80 ft. This reduction in height limits would help provide a transition between the greater building heights along the southern part of Van Ness Avenue and the lower, residential buildings which are prevalent in the north of California.



## **SUBAREA 1 (McAllister Street to Broadway)**

1. The present C-2 zoning controls would be changed to an RC-4 district (High Density Residential-Commercial Combined District) with a Special Use District overlay which would specify height and bulk and commercial space limitations as well as housing preservation standards. The maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) in this area would be calculated including residential space and would be reduced to 7:1 in the 130-ft. height district and 4.5:1 in the 80-ft. district to facilitate general reduction of building bulk. Office uses would be restricted to a FAR of 1:1. Ground floor occupancy would be restricted to retail uses.

dwelling unit is allowed for every XY square feet of lot area). Minimum unit size would be established as part of the conditional use review required for all new construction exceeding a height of 40 ft. in a RC-4 district.
2. The amount of commercial space allowed would be related to the amount of residential space provided. Under the regulations proposed, one square foot of commercial space would be allowed (but not required) for every three square feet of new residential space built. Expansion or introduction of commercial space in an existing building would be allowed only if it results in a overall ratio of three square feet of residential uses for every square foot of commercial uses within the entire building. Residential space could exceed the 3 to 1 residential to commercial ratio as long as ground floor retail activity were provided along the Van Ness frontage.
3. The residential unit densities of each parcel would be based on building volume established by height and bulk controls; this departs from the established method of residential density control which defines the allowable number of dwelling units strictly as a function of lot size (i.e. one dwelling unit is allowed for every XY square feet of lot area). Minimum unit size would be established as part of the conditional use review required for all new construction exceeding a height of 40 ft. in a RC-4 district.
4. The provision of affordable housing would be encouraged by the proposed variable density controls which facilitate smaller unit sizes. Development of rental housing is also encouraged through flexibility in dwelling unit size and design requirements. Developers would be encouraged to work with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Economic Development to provide the maximum possible number of affordable housing units.
5. Buildings exceeding 40 ft. in height would be subject to set-back requirements imposed by the Planning Commission to insure the continuation of existing significant street wall heights.
6. Building height limits between California Street and Broadway would be reduced from the existing 130/105 ft. level to 80 ft. to facilitate the transition toward lower building heights along the northern part of the Avenue.
7. New development adjacent to architecturally significant structures would be required to harmonize with those buildings by continuing compositional features such as setbacks, horizontal lines (i.e., belt courses, cornices), window proportions, and overall facade divisions. Any building design would be subject to design review. Thus, a generally uniform "street wall" or building height for Van Ness of about 80 feet would be established.



Strong architectural articulation would be required up to the 20 foot or second story level. Buildings would be required to be built to the front property line. Open plazas or arcades fronting directly on the street property line would not be allowed at ground level. Continuous commercial frontage along Van Ness Avenue, designed with careful consideration of building base design, articulation, texture and color, would be encouraged to create a lively and interesting pedestrian environment, as would the provision of street trees and street furniture.

Rear yard requirements could be relaxed for new development if a comparable amount of open space is provided within the new development and if the interior block open space formed by the adjacent rear yards is not adversely affected.

0. Residential parking would be required at a ratio of one parking space for each dwelling unit.

1. A special sign district would be established to prevent conflicts between new signage and residential land uses as well as the proliferation of ill-placed or overly large signage.

#### **SUBAREA 2 (Broadway to Bay Street)**

Conservation of existing housing north of Broadway would be encouraged through a zoning change. Properties presently zoned commercial (C-2) would be reclassified to a medium density residential - commercial combined (RC-3) district which would allow ground floor commercial activity while protecting existing upper level housing from being converted to non-residential use.

Properties presently zoned residential (RM-1, RM-2, RM-4) north of Chestnut Street would remain under those same zoning controls. This would encourage retention of sound rental housing.

2. Special sign controls would be adopted to ensure compatability with signs in Subarea 1.

#### **D. SUBAREA 3 (Bay Street to Shoreline)**

1. Attractive, pedestrian-oriented uses along Beach Street would be encouraged along Beach Street. The area's function as a visual terminus of the Avenue and a major outdoor recreation area for the City would be strengthened by full support of the National Park Service Plans for improvements in this area.
-



VAN NESS AVENUE NORTH FROM HAYES STREET, OCTOBER 15, 1905.

REF 711.4097 V26p

Van Ness plan : proposal  
for adoption /  
1986.



### III. VAN NESS AVENUE: PAST AND PRESENT

#### History

In 1849, William Eddy extended the 50 Vara land division of the downtown to Larkin Street, replicating street and block dimensions created by earlier surveys of Jean Vioget and Jasper O'Farrell (1). The Western Addition, as the sand dunes and chaparral west of Larkin were called, was subsequently surveyed by several private groups before the city-sponsored Van Ness Survey was completed in the mid-1850's. Originally known as Marlette Street, the centerpiece of this extended 50 Vara survey was re-named in honor of Mayor James Van Ness. Situated in the valley between Nob and Russian Hills and Pacific Heights, Van Ness Avenue was intended to function as the city's central north-south spine. Consequently, the survey shaved off parts of the blocks on both sides of Van Ness to create a 125 foot wide avenue (2).

Despite grand hopes for the new Boulevard, development of properties along the avenue was slow and the U.S. Coast Survey of 1869 indicated only scattered structures. In the 1860's Van Ness began at Market Street and terminated at the U.S. military reserve at Black Point. Since principal growth corridors radiated out from the downtown, it was a long time before cross town streets such as Van Ness could become important arteries. The 1884 Coast and Geodetic Survey shows buildings concentrated along intersecting streets with cable car lines such as Fulton, McAllister, Ellis and Geary. Throughout this period, Polk Street, rather than Van Ness, functioned as the principal commercial street of the mid-city, serving people living on Nob and Russian Hills. It is conceivable that the width of Van Ness - like that of Market Street - discouraged its use as a shopping street.

Calif. Hist. Society, San Francisco



VAN NESS NORTH FROM HAYES ST. Oct. 18, 1906





Calif. Hist. Society, San Francisco

VAN NESS, EDDY TO ELLIS ST. 1906



Calif. Hist. Society, San Francisco

VAN NESS, GEARY TO BUSH ST. 1907

Thus, as opposed to the heterogeneous development of the avenue in the twentieth century, the nineteenth century land pattern primarily consisted of wooden dwelling units. While lower Van Ness Avenue was soon occupied by dense working class housing, the middle and upper reaches of the avenue became characterized by wealthy residences. Italianate homes were constructed during the 1870's and 1880's, and were followed by large Queen Anne resi-

dences in the 1890's. Prominent families who owned homes on Van Ness included the Spreckels, Crockers and Gianninis. Aside from residences, the only large buildings shown on the 1899-1905 Sanborn Maps were the Mechanics Library, Concordia Club, St. Lukes Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church and St. Dunston's Hotel. Livery stables, small industries, a school and other miscellaneous uses were located side streets.



Industrialization of Rincon Hill – caused by the Second Street Cut of 1869 – and shortage of available land on Nob Hill encouraged the development of a new high-income neighborhood, and Van Ness Avenue became a logical choice largely stimulated by proximity to downtown, availability of undeveloped parcels, and access to cable car lines. Furthermore, in the mid-1870's a row of Eucalyptus trees was planted along each side of the avenue, contributing to its park-like ambiance. For similar reasons, large houses were also constructed during the same period on Franklin Street, a block to the west.

Van Ness Avenue's basic land use pattern continued until 1906. The earthquake and fire of that year destroyed most of San Francisco and would likely have gone on to burn Pacific Heights had it not been for the great width of Van Ness Avenue, a natural fire break. During the first day of the fire soldiers had attempted fire

breaks further east of Van Ness Avenue, all of which proved unsuccessful. They tried again at Van Ness on the second day, dynamiting every building on its east side south of Filbert Street, containing most of the fire and saving the Western Addition: the area between Sutter and Washington Streets was not contained until Franklin Street, and the area south of Golden Gate Avenue was not contained until Octavia Street.

Immediately after the fire, burned out businesses from the downtown moved to either Van Ness Avenue and Fillmore Street. Surviving mansions on the west side of Van Ness were converted into stores, and temporary commercial buildings were quickly constructed on the east side of the street. The city's major department stores -- City of Paris, the White House, and the Emporium -- all located here, as did the Bank of California and the Anglo California Bank.



California Historical Society, San Francisco

VAN NESS AT ELLIS ST. c.1890's



Calif. Hist. Society, San Francisco

VAN NESS, BUSH TO SACRAMENTO ST. 1907

By 1909, however, the rejuvenation of the downtown district led to the exodus of businesses from Van Ness Avenue, the second transformation of the avenue's land use pattern in less than three years. Far from returning to its earlier history as a residential boulevard, development along the lower and middle sections of Van Ness consisted of residential, commercial, industrial as well as institutional uses. The 1911 Sanborn Map illustrates the heterogeneous uses - including auto body, wagon and bicycle repair shops - as well as numerous undeveloped sites. A National Guard Armory was located at the southeast corner of California Street while clubs and hotels were scattered along the mid section of the avenue.

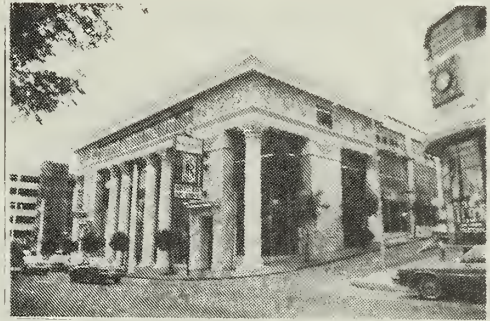
In contrast to these areas, the upper section of Van Ness, north of Jackson Street, retained its residential character. In addition to several surviving nineteenth century mansions, private homes and large apartment buildings in a wide variety of architectural styles were constructed following the 1906

disaster. After 1915 and the Panama Pacific Exposition, residences were constructed along Van Ness north of Francisco Street.

By the 1920's - aside from several large apartment buildings - automobile-oriented businesses emerged as the most common use between Civic Center and Jackson Street. Earlier, between 1904 and 1908 many small auto showrooms and garages were built along Golden Gate Avenue between Hyde and Van Ness, and after 1910 several small showrooms and repair garages located on Van Ness itself. The growing automobile industry soon demanded more grandiose buildings, and by 1911 prominent architects such as McDonald and Applegarth, Willis Polk and Bernard Maybeck began designing automobile showrooms.



After the Second World War, the designation of Van Ness as U.S. Highway 101 led to the use of the avenue as a primary vehicular thoroughfare and the concurrent re-orientation of businesses towards citywide and regional markets. Movie theaters and restaurants opened up alongside automobile showrooms. Since the late 1970's, automobile-oriented businesses have declined as some auto showrooms relocated to other areas within the city. Former auto showrooms have been converted to restaurants and offices, and some have been demolished for new mixed use residential developments. Given the relocation of the auto showroom businesses and ancillary auto service and parts businesses, a number of properties will likely be available for new development or adaptive re-use in the near future.



(1) A cellular unit, known as Vara, provided a set of dimensions which allowed for grid expansion throughout the South of Market and northern part of San Francisco. In the latter area, the 50 Vara survey consisted of blocks measuring 412'6" by 275', or six 50 Vara squares whose sides measured 137'6". Street widths were commonly 25 Vara, or 68'9", although this varied considerably.

(2) The creation of a 125' wide boulevard out of a 68'9" street necessitated shaving off parts of the blocks on either side of Van Ness. Thus, 28'9" was taken from the block extending to Polk Street and 27'9" was garnered from the western block extending to Franklin Street. The choice of 125 feet for Van Ness may have been influenced by the widths of

major streets in eastern cities, such as Broadway in New York and Market Street in Philadelphia.

## Van Ness Avenue Today

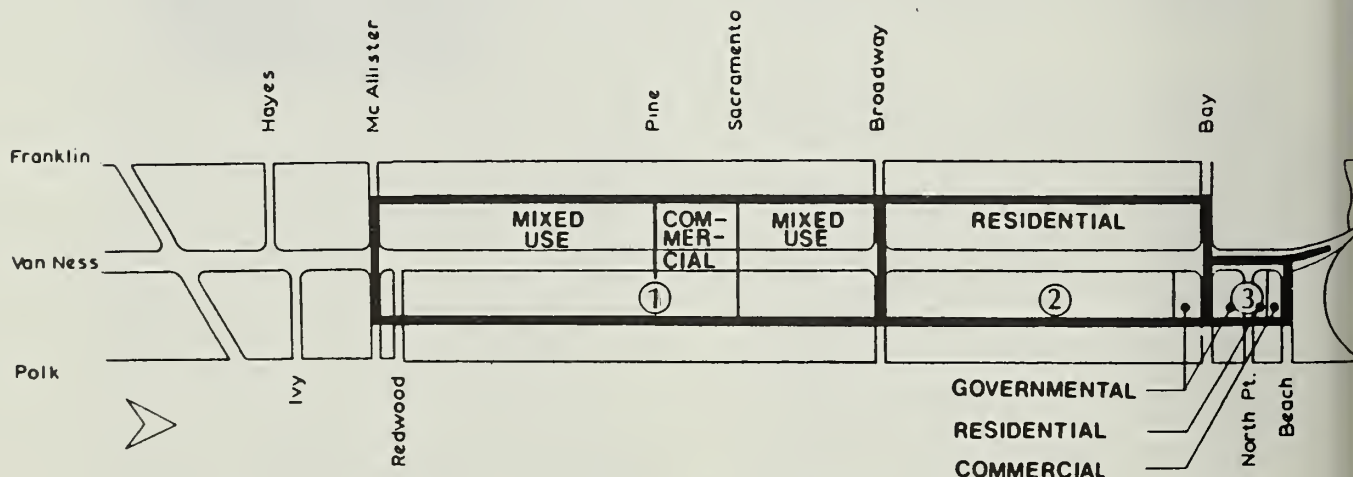
Van Ness Avenue extends 63 blocks -- some 12,000 feet -- from Market Street north to the Bay. The Plan covers the area north of the Civic Center and includes all parcels fronting on the Avenue, as well as some abutting properties, from McAllister Street to the San Francisco Bay shoreline north of Beach Street. The Market Street/Van Ness area is included within the Department's Downtown Plan. The Civic Center area is zoned for public use ("P") and is the subject of the Civic Center Plan Element of the City's Master Plan. Therefore, these portions of Van Ness Avenue from Market Street to McAllister Street are not covered by this Plan.



Van Ness Avenue has a mixed residential and commercial character. Although residential and commercial uses exist throughout the length of the street, the largest concentration of housing is found in the northern portion of the street, while the highest concentration of commercial uses is located in the southern portion.

## SUBAREAS ① Through ③

Figure 2



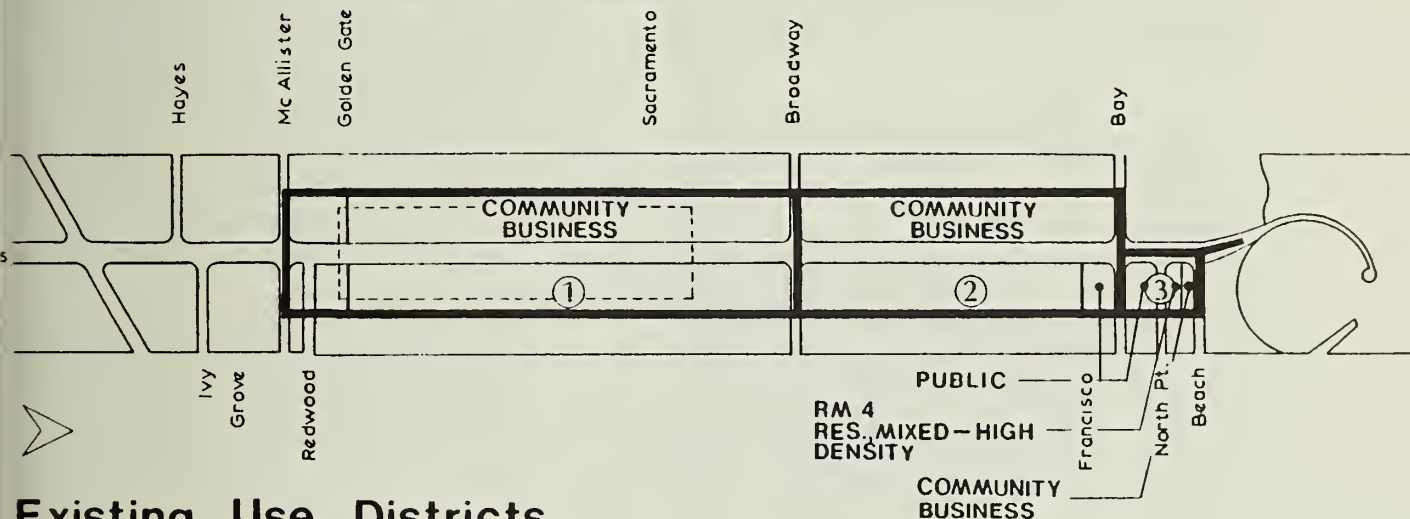
## Existing Predominant Land Uses



To better guide new development within the Plan's study area, three discrete subareas have been identified and are described below.

## SUBAREAS ① Through ③

Figure 3



## Existing Use Districts

--- AUTOMOTIVE SPECIAL USE DISTRICT

### Subarea 1: Mixed-Use Development, McAllister Street to Broadway

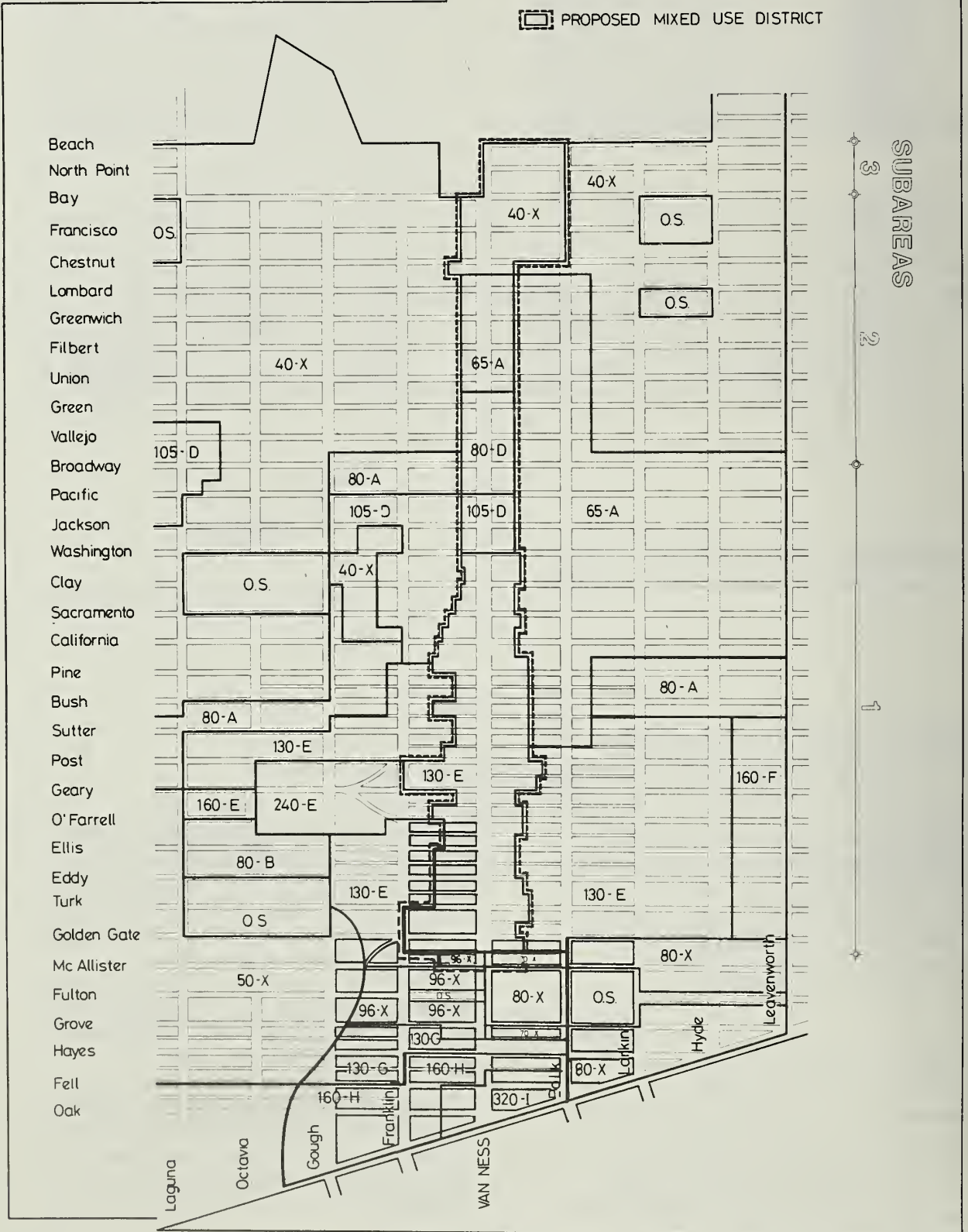
Subarea 1 encompasses portions of 32 blocks extending north from McAllister Street to Broadway, and east-west from about the midblock point on both sides of Van Ness towards Franklin and Polk Streets. Many of these blocks are bisected by minor streets.

Van Ness Avenue becomes U.S. Highway 101 from Golden Gate Avenue to Lombard Street. As a major thoroughfare, this portion of Van Ness has become a commercial district featuring an auto row, hotels, motels, restaurants, and a variety of other businesses serving city residents and visitors.

This subarea is presently designated a C-2 (Community Business) use district with a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 4.8:1 or 3.6:1, depending on its proximity to an RM-4 or RC-4 district. Much of the area is currently designated as an Automotive Special Use District, which allows a 10:1 FAR for automotive-oriented uses. However, the Avenue's role as an automotive center is decreasing and a number of the auto showrooms have recently relocated to the Potrero Avenue Autocenter. Many of the vacated buildings have been renovated and converted to office or retail use.

Figure 4

# EXISTING HEIGHT & BULK DISTRICTS



Most of the subarea lies within a 130-E Height and Bulk District. However, the height limit declines from 130 feet to 80 feet along Van Ness as it approaches the Bay and to 65 feet on the eastern side approaching Polk Street.

From McAllister Street to Pine Street, existing zoning would allow a "high" residential density of 1:200 (one dwelling unit for each 200 gross square feet of lot area). North of Pine Street, existing zoning would allow a "medium", "moderate", or "low" (1:400, 1:600 or 1:800) residential density and a 3.6 to 1 FAR commercial density for properties presently zoned C-2 and not lying within the Automobile Special Use District.

Few parcels have been developed to their maximum limit, as most of the buildings are only two, three or four stories in height. The west side of Van Ness Avenue from McAllister to Bush Streets lies within the San Francisco

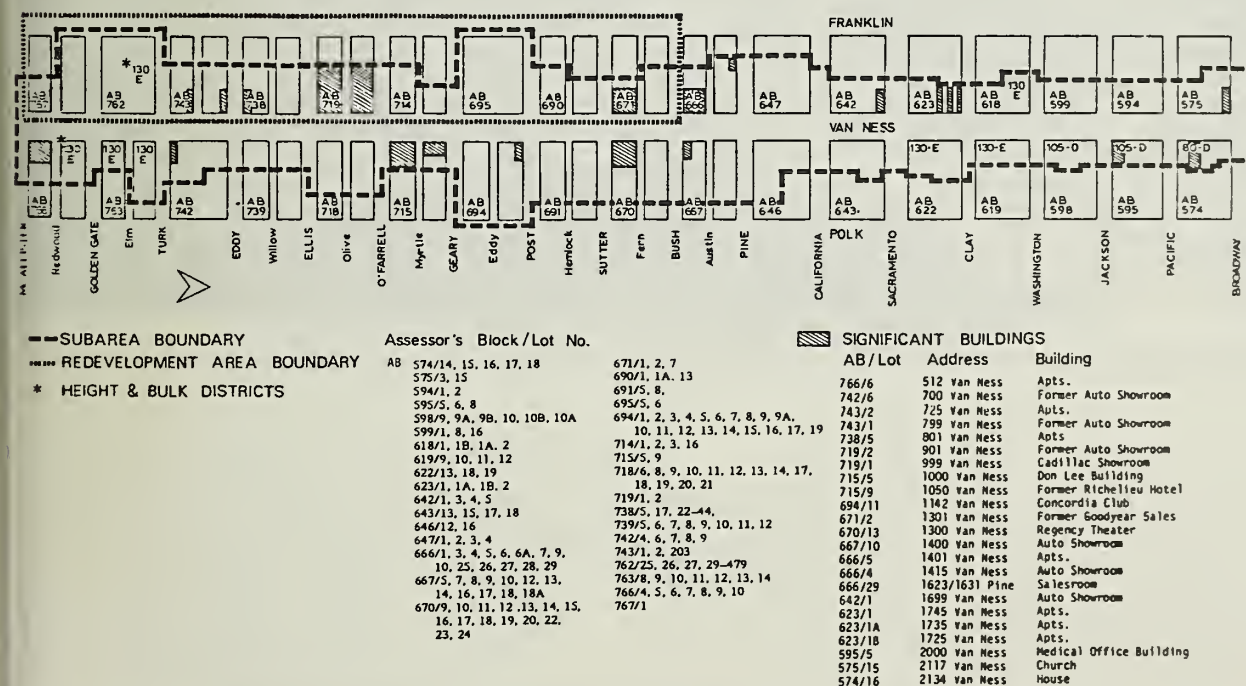
Redevelopment Agency's Western Addition A-2 Redevelopment Area. The Redevelopment Plan allows high density commercial and residential development in this area.

There are 27 highly rated, architecturally significant buildings within the subarea. In addition, there are about 980 dwelling units in 18 buildings (including 450 in Opera Plaza) within the subarea.

The four block area around Van Ness Avenue and California Street occupies the highest elevation of the Van Ness Avenue corridor. This area features two important and unique resources--the cable car terminus and the California Street view corridor. The eastward view from Gough Street offers a striking panorama of the East Bay foothills, the downtown skyline and portions of the Bay Bridge framed by the upper and lower slopes of Nob Hill.

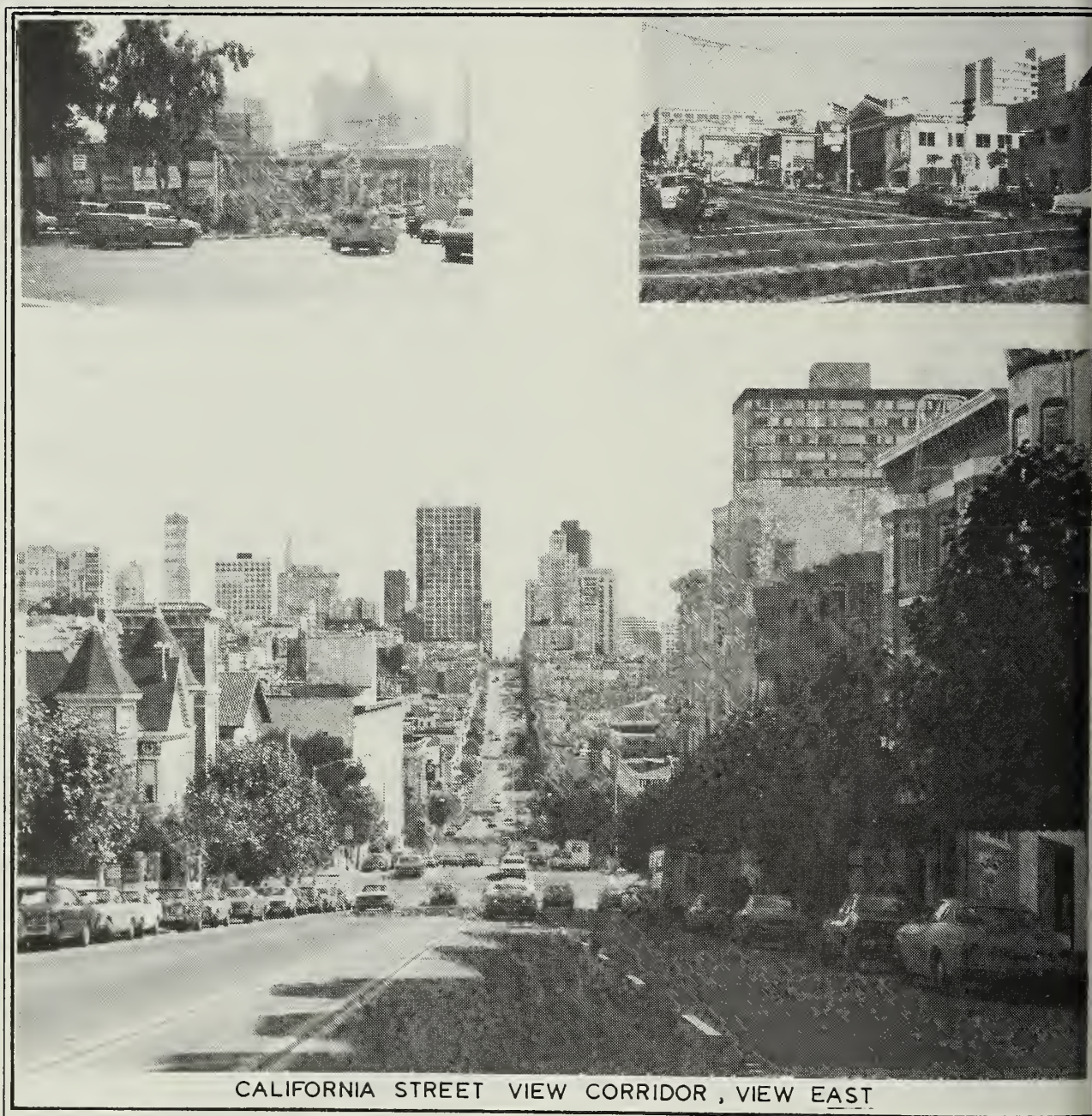
SUBAREA 1

Figure 5





## SUBAREA 1



CALIFORNIA STREET VIEW CORRIDOR , VIEW EAST



## Subarea 2: Housing Conservation (Broadway to Bay Street)

Subarea 2 extends eleven blocks from Broadway to Bay Street and encompasses portions of 20 city blocks. Zoned C-2, RM-1, or RM-2 with a 3.6:1 or 1.8:1 FAR and height limits diminishing from 80 to 40 feet, the primary use is medium-density apartment housing, although a number of older houses have been converted wholly or partially to commercial use. A number of the buildings in this subarea feature ground-floor commercial uses. About 970 residential units in 68 buildings lie within the subarea.

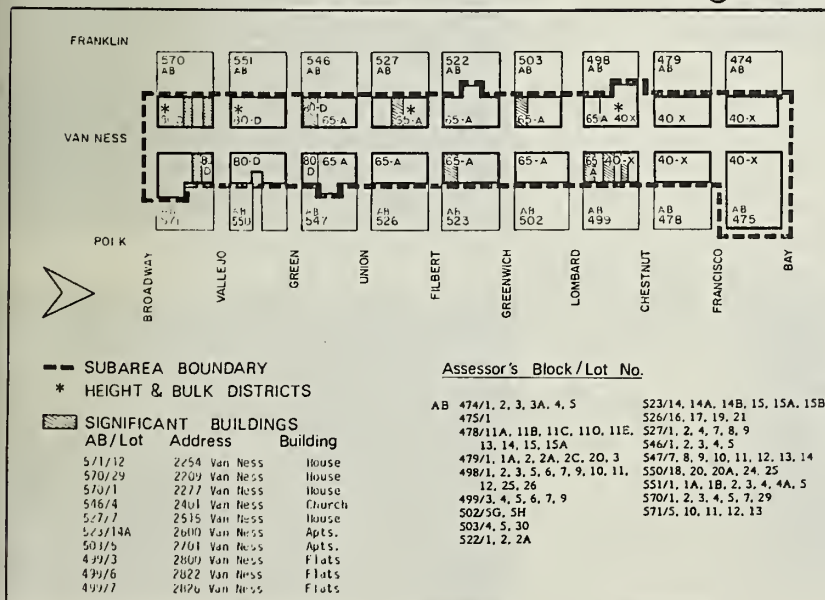
Most of the commercially-zoned properties along Van Ness Avenue contain one and two-story buildings where six or eight-story buildings are allowed under existing height limitations. Residentially-zoned lands are developed more closely to their maximum allowable height; the existing density in this area is higher than what would be allowed under current zoning.

There are eight highly rated architecturally significant buildings within the subarea.



## SUBAREA 2

Figure 6



### Subarea 3: Van Ness Terminus and Open Space (Bay Street to the Bay Shoreline)

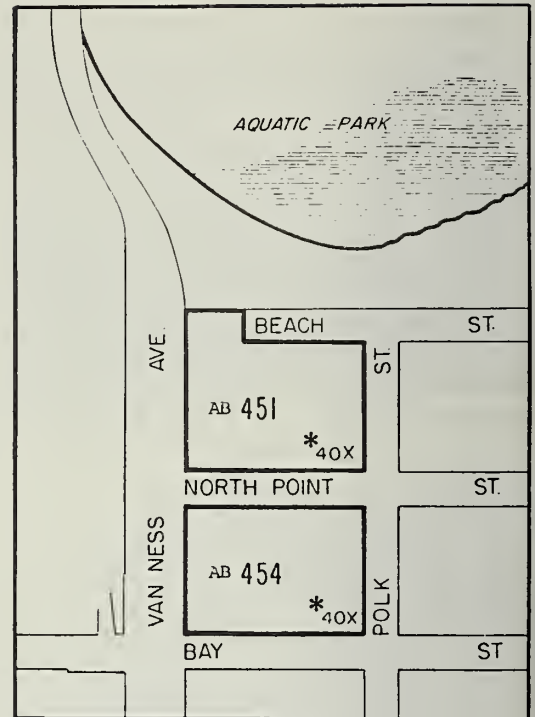
Subarea 3 extends from Bay Street to the San Francisco Bay shoreline. One block of the subarea is devoted entirely to public use (Galileo High School gymnasium and play field); the other block includes two 18-story residential apartment towers (the Fontana) zoned RM-4 (residential mixed, high density) and an office building (the Eastman Kodak Building) zoned C-2 with an allowable 4.8:1 FAR; on the west is Fort Mason. The portion of the area north of Beach Street is under the jurisdiction of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

The most striking resource in this subarea is the public right-of-way which extends from the Van Ness Avenue/Bay Street intersection north to the Bay shoreline and the Municipal Pier. It offers a spectacular view of the Bay and its islands and the hills beyond. The visitor to this area is afforded a panoramic view, moving from an exciting cityscape to the more soft and majestic forms of the Bay waters and the lush Marin headlands. However, much of the wide concrete and asphalt right-of-way is devoted to parking (200 + spaces) which depreciates the area's open spaces and scenic vistas.



### SUBAREA 3

Figure 7



- SUBAREA BOUNDARY
- \* HEIGHT & BULK DISTRICTS
- Assessor's Block/Lot No.  
AB 454/1  
451/4,5,6





#### IV. OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

The following objectives and policies would apply to all developments within the Van Ness Avenue Plan corridor. Policies are given by subarea to facilitate use of this plan.

##### A. LAND USE

###### Subarea 1: (McAllister to Broadway)

###### High Density Mixed Use Development

Subarea 1 is one of the few areas in the city where new housing can be accommodated with minimal impacts on existing residential neighborhoods and public services.

Some of the features that make Subarea 1 attractive for medium density mixed use development with high density housing include:

- This 16 block strip along Van Ness Avenue maintains a "central place" location and identity. The area is close to the city's major employment center, is well-served by transit, has well developed infra-

structure (roadway, water, sewer and other public services), wide roadway (93+ feet) and sidewalks (16+ feet), has continuous commercial frontage and numerous attractive, architecturally outstanding buildings.

- There are a number of large parcels which are substantially underdeveloped with respect to current height and floor area controls.
- A height limitation of between 80 and 130 ft. would allow sufficient floor area on specific parcels to make development of underused parcels into housing economically feasible.
- The minor streets which bisect most of the blocks within this subarea facilitate access to and from new developments with minimal affects on major east-west thoroughfares or on Van Ness Avenue.

Development of a number of medium density, mixed-use projects within Subarea 1 would provide the key "anchor"— the critical mass, scale, and urban design treatment which would facilitate the transformation of Van Ness Avenue into an attractive residential boulevard.

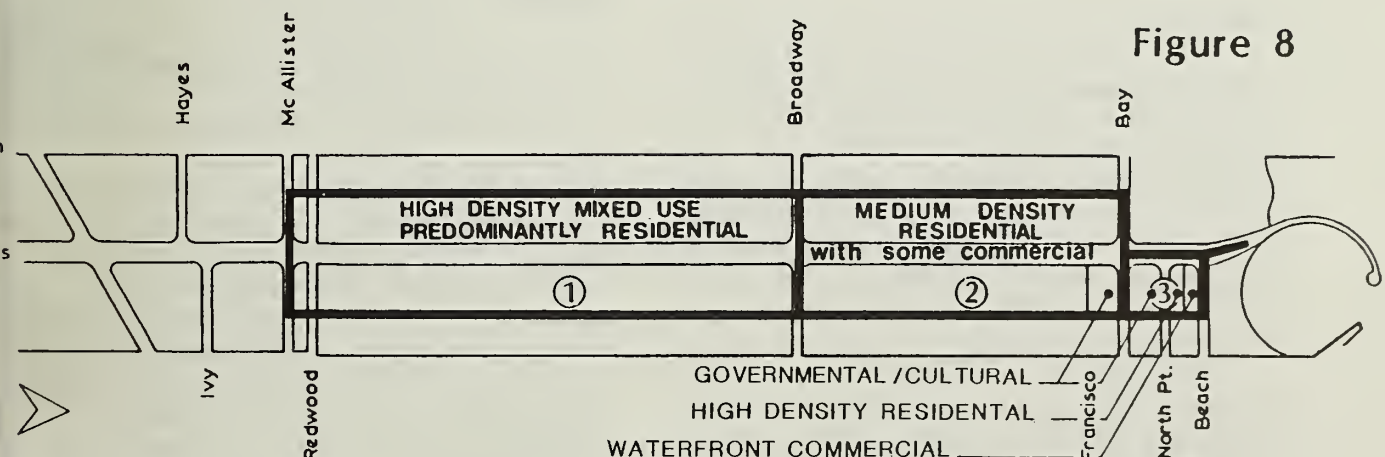


Figure 8

#### Proposed Land Uses By Subarea

## **OBJECTIVE 1**

### **ENCOURAGE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT OF VAN NESS AVENUE.**

#### **Policy 1**

**Modify existing use controls from Community Business and Automobile Special Use District classifications to a Combined Residential-Commercial Use District designation designed to encourage a combination of high density residential development above a podium of commercial uses, and to protect existing dwellings.**

Development of mixed use buildings along the Avenue would accommodate the need for housing and respects the Avenue's commercial heritage at the same time. Subarea 1 (McAllister Street to Broadway) should feature high density residential development with commercial space to occupy the base of the building. This commercial space should serve as a buffer between the busy street and the residential levels above.

Existing commercial uses above the ground floor should be permitted to remain as nonconforming uses for the life of the building provided that no commercial space is added.

#### **Policy 2**

**To induce construction of housing, link the amount of commercial space allowed to the amount of residential space provided. Require a minimum of three square feet of occupied residential space to be built for every square foot of occupied commercial space developed. Restrict office uses to a maximum FAR of 1:1.**

Residential space could exceed the required ratio of residential to commercial space. However, ground floor commercial space should still be required.

Expansion of existing commercial space should be allowed if the resulting overall building area features three square feet of residential uses for every square foot of other uses. Expansion or introduction of commercial space in landmark buildings can be exempted from this requirement with conditional use authorization if it can be proven that the provision of the required residential space would be economically infeasible. The provision of the required residential space could occur on-site or on a separate site located within the Van Ness Plan area.

#### **Policy 3**

**Allow residential densities to be established by building volume rather than lot size.**

The number of units provided within individual projects would depend on the height and bulk of the building, the amount of commercial space provided under the minimum housing-to-commercial ratio, the amount of on-site parking provided and the size of the units. Minimum unit size would be established as part of the Conditional Use review process.

#### **Policy 4**

**Maximize the Number of Housing Units.**

An overall mix of unit sizes on Van Ness Avenue is desirable to encourage a diverse and mixed range of occupants. However, the emphasis should be on a larger number of medium sized units (1 and 2 bedroom) rather than a smaller number of large size units because Van Ness Avenue is not anticipated to be a preferred area for family housing. It is therefore more desirable to achieve greater affordability for the smaller units by building at a high density. Construction of rental housing is encouraged.



## **Policy 5**

**Employ various techniques to provide more affordable housing.**

The Plan allows broad design flexibility as to unit size, allowing the creation of small, compact units as a means of lowering unit cost if there is a market demand for such units. A number of design measures and marketing strategies such as "street-facing" or "no view" units and units with quality building materials yet lower cost appliances and carpeting can reduce unit costs and prices.

## **Subarea 2 (Broadway to Bay Street) Housing Conservation**

### **OBJECTIVE 2**

**MAINTAIN THE SCALE AND DENSITY OF THIS RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD.**

#### **Policy 1**

**Preserve existing housing stock and infill with carefully designed, medium density new housing.**

New development should be restricted to residential use with neighborhood-serving retail use allowed at the ground floor. This would involve reclassifying properties from community business (C-2) to RC-3, which permits medium density residential use (1 dwelling unit permitted for every 400 square feet of lot area) with ground floor commercial use.

Existing small scale commercial uses above the ground floor should be permitted to remain as non-conforming uses for the life of the building. Existing ground floor residential space could be converted to small-scale commercial use provided that upper level residential space and its required accessory uses (e.g. parking, open space, rear yard, access ways, other mechanical features) were not adversely affected by such conversion.

## **Subarea 3 (Bay Street To Wharf) Van Ness Terminus and Open Space**

### **OBJECTIVE 3**

**TRANSFORM THE AREA INTO AN ATTRACTIVE GATEWAY TO THE RESIDENTIAL BOULEVARD AND A TRANSITION FROM FISHERMAN'S WHARF AND THE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.**

#### **Policy 1**

**Create a tree-lined and landscaped median strip within the Van Ness street space and plant rows of trees in the sidewalk space.**

This greenspace element, which would realign some existing parking spaces, should be designed to "announce" the area's attractive shoreline open space resources and visually direct the visitor to them.

#### **Policy 2**

**Support National Park Service plans for improvements of the area within the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) boundaries.**

The GGNRA General Management Plan calls for the following improvements:

"All of the Van Ness Avenue (asphalt paving) inside the park boundary will be removed and replaced with landscaping. The Sea Scout clubhouse and maintenance docks will also be removed. The Sea Scouts' boats will be moved to the east side of the lagoon, and their programs and meetings will be held in the aquatic center. The food concession at the foot of Van Ness will receive a good sprucing-up. The Municipal Pier will also get a substantial cleanup and minor improvements such as fish-cleaning stations and restrooms. (It may also require structural renovation). Night lighting throughout the area will be upgraded."

## B. URBAN DESIGN

### OBJECTIVE 4

**ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT WHICH REINFORCES TOPOGRAPHY AND URBAN PATTERN, AND DEFINES AND GIVES VARIETY TO THE AVENUE.**

#### Topography and Street Pattern

Van Ness Avenue is the central north-south spine and one of the widest streets in the City. Bounded by Civic Center and the Bay and characterized by excellent views, the Avenue defines and links many adjacent neighborhoods. In connecting Market Street to the Bay, Van Ness forms the western edge of the inner city and separates the Nob and Russian Hill neighborhoods from Pacific Heights. The Avenue also provides access between a number of focal points, including landmark buildings, cultural centers, important view corridors and the Bay. The juxtaposition of

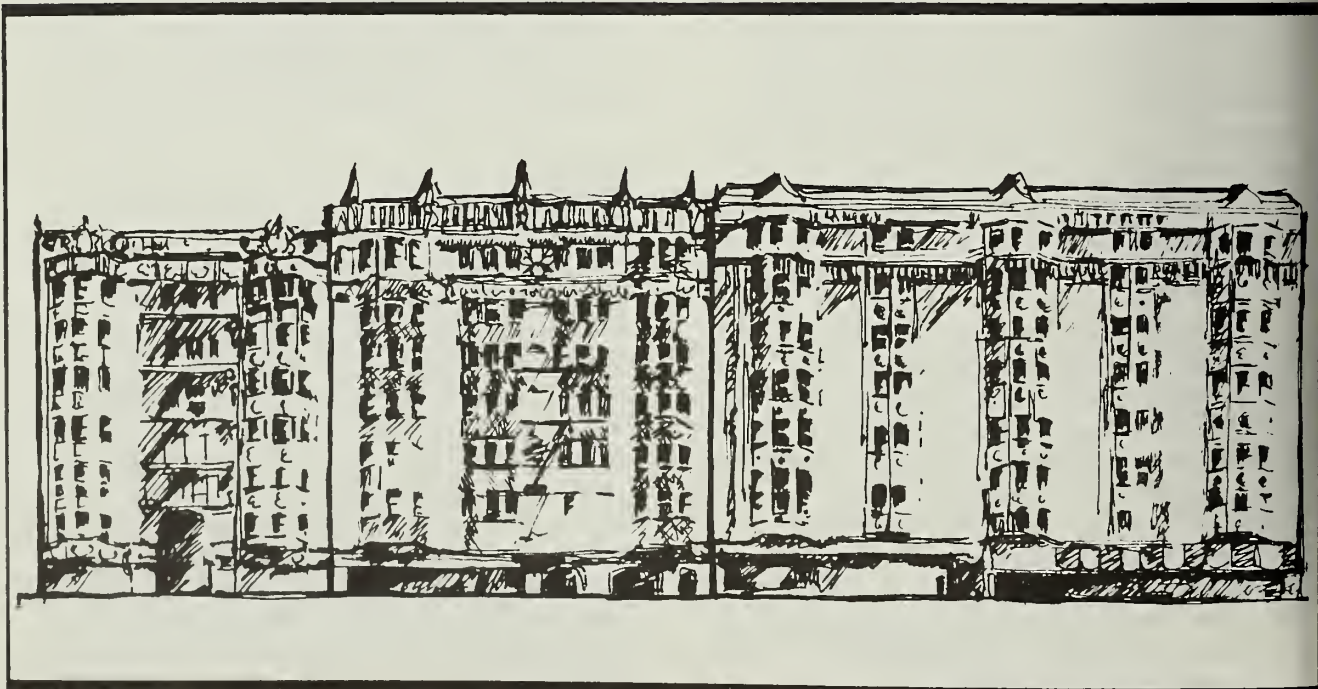
the Avenue's large monumental structures with fine-grain urban fabric to the east creates an exciting contrast within the cityscape.

### POLICY 1

**Establish height controls to emphasize topography and adequately frame the great width of the Avenue.**

Existing height limits on the Avenue range from 40 feet at the northern end to 130 feet in the central portion. This height differentiation responds to topographic conditions as well as land use patterns, maintaining distinctions between areas of different character. For example, height districts are gradually tapered from 130 feet around the hilltop at Washington Street to 80 feet at Pacific Avenue and further to 65 and 40 feet towards the Bay shoreline. Although the majority of existing height controls are adequate to define both the overall topography as well as the great width of the Avenue, the height limit

Figure 9





between California and Pacific Streets should be lowered from the existing 130/105-ft. level to 80 ft. in order to facilitate the transition between the greater building heights along the southern part of the Avenue and the mostly low-rise residential development north of Broadway. Development to maximum height should be closely monitored to avoid blocking views between the high slopes on both sides of the Avenue. Good proportion between the size of a street and that of its buildings is important for streets to be interesting and pleasant places. The proposed height limits, combined with the Van Ness Plan's proposed bulk controls, encourage definition of the 93-foot wide Avenue.

## Policy 2

**Encourage a regular street wall and harmonious building forms along the Avenue.**

New development should create a coherent street wall along the Avenue through property line development at approximately the same height. Since block face widths are constant, a regularized street wall encourages buildings of similar scale and massing. Nevertheless, some variety of height is inevitable and desirable due to the need to highlight buildings of historical and architectural significance.

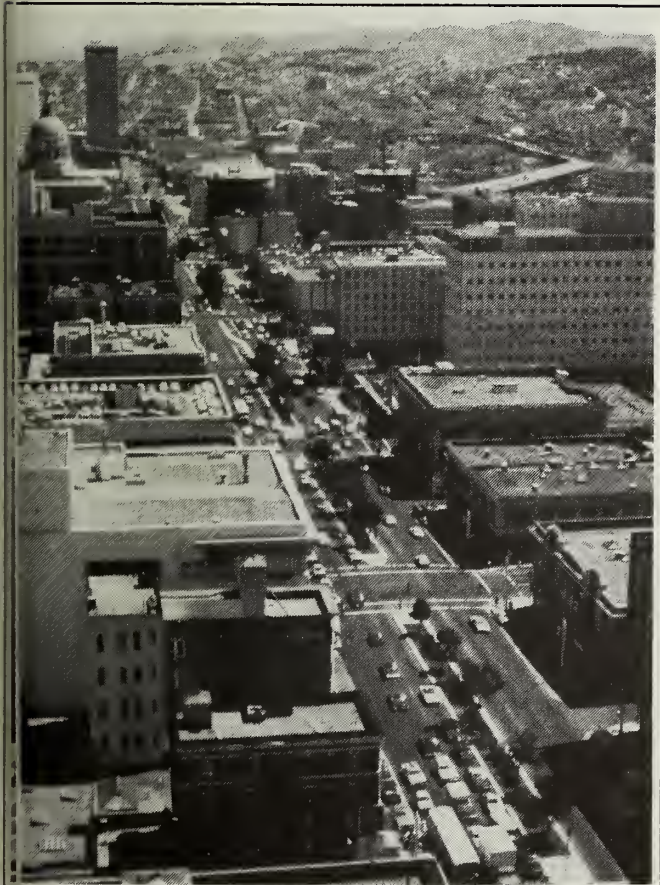
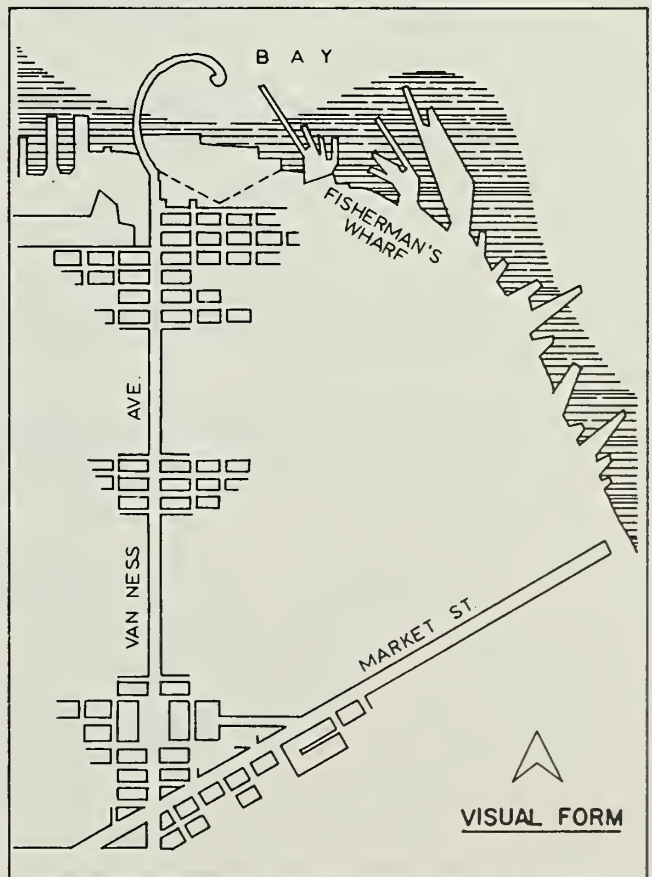


Photo By John Field



The following controls are proposed for the various bulk districts as shown on the accompanying map:

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TABLE 1  
PROPOSED BULK LIMITS

District Symbol on Bulk Map	Height Above which Maximum Dimensions Apply (in ft.)	Maximum Plan Dimensions (in feet)	
		<u>Length</u>	<u>Diagonal Dimension</u>
O.S.	See Section 290 of the City Planning Code		
X	See Section 260(a)3 of the Planning Code		
E	65	110	140
F	80	110	140
V	*	110	140

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\* Between 40 and 80 feet depending on the prevailing streetwall.

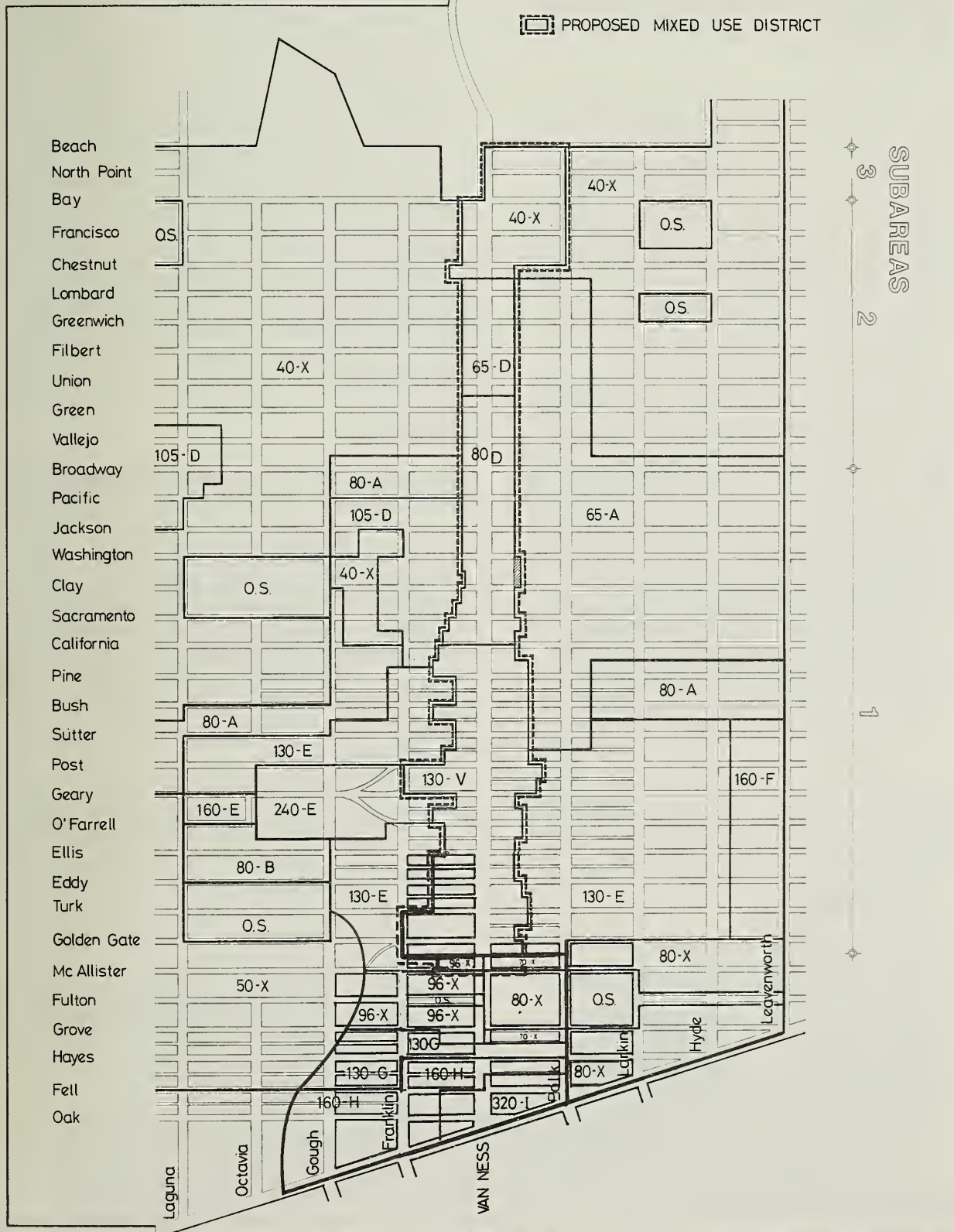
Subarea 1 is located almost exclusively in the "V" bulk district. The following additional controls should apply to the "V" bulk district:

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Figure 10

## PROPOSED HEIGHT & BULK DISTRICTS



## Setbacks

### Policy 3

**Continue the street wall heights as defined by existing significant buildings and promote an adequate enclosure of the Avenue.**

New construction on Van Ness Avenue can occur in two basic situations. In some cases, the development will take place between or adjacent to architecturally significant buildings. In this instance, continuity of design and scale between the old and the new is of major importance. In other cases, new development will take place in a more isolated design context; for example, between two existing two-story, non-descript commercial structures. In this instance, the overall continuity of scale along the Avenue is of greater importance than the design character of adjacent buildings. Setbacks of up to 20 feet in depth should be considered for all new development above 40 feet in height and should be required whenever necessary to continue existing significant street wall heights and to define an adequate enclosure of the Avenue. Setbacks can also serve to buffer the upper-level residential units from street-level noise.

### Policy 4

**Preserve existing view corridors.**

In addition to the setback along the Van Ness Avenue frontage, a setback approximately fifteen feet deep should be provided at an appropriate height along California, Pine, Sacramento, Clay and Washington Streets when necessary to preserve view corridors. The recommended setbacks on the east-west streets could be varied on a case-by-case basis, through the conditional use review process, as individual buildings undertake massing studies to determine an appropriate building form and setback which would preserve these significant view corridors.

### Rear Yards

### Policy 5

**Encourage full lot development resulting in a maximum number of dwelling units.**

The rear yard requirement can be waived if a comparable amount of usable open space is provided elsewhere within the development, if any interior block open space formed by the rear yards of abutting properties is not adversely affected, and if adequate light and air to all dwelling units is maintained.





## Minimum Distance between Towers

### Policy 6

**Encourage separation of towers for buildings involving more than one tower.**

In a project involving more than one tower, the towers should be separated so they are viewed as separate structures, thereby reducing their apparent bulk. When towers lack adequate physical separation and differentiation of building materials, texture coloration or massing, they can be perceived as a single structure and the purpose of the bulk requirements is defeated. In addition, building separation allows greater light and air exposure to individual housing units and commercial spaces.

### OBJECTIVE 5

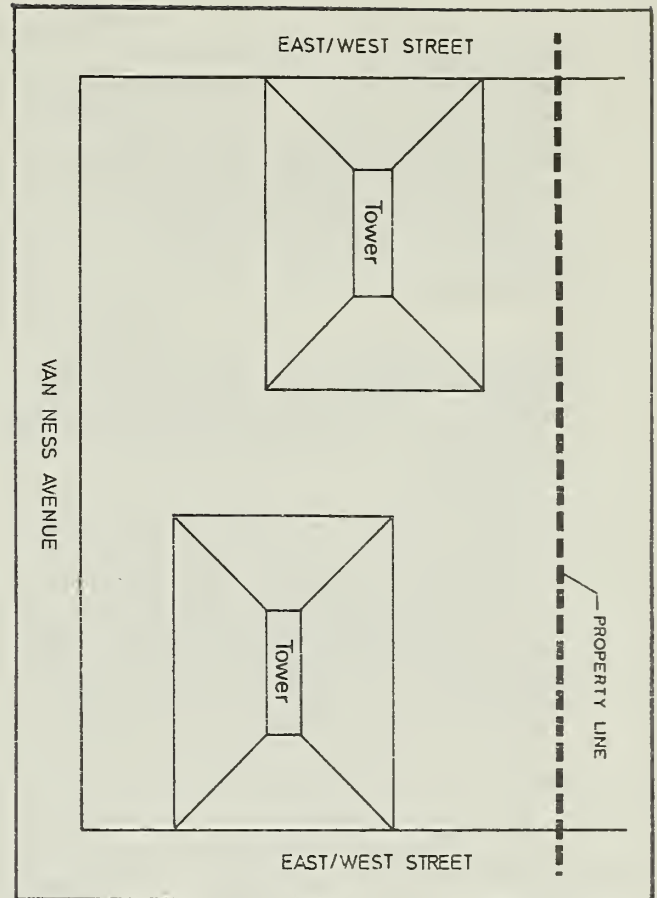
**ENCOURAGE DISTINGUISHED ARCHITECTURE WHOSE SCALE, COMPOSITION AND DETAILING ENHANCES THE OVERALL DESIGN STRUCTURE OF THE AVENUE AND RELATES TO HUMAN SCALE.**

### Building Form and Design

Architecturally significant structures along Van Ness Avenue impart a sense of visual unity, although they are characterized by a great stylistic variety. In contrast, undifferentiated buildings can be overwhelming, creating an inhospitable pedestrian environment. Differentiation of building sections -- including setting off a building base from shaft and tower -- creates a human scale at street level.

### Policy 1

**Design exterior facades which complement and enhance significant works of architecture along the Avenue.**



Architectural styles along the Avenue include Romanesque, Gothic, Spanish Colonial, Renaissance/ Baroque, Beaux Arts Classical, and Modern. Such architectural variety precludes the predominance of any one style, even though the Beaux Arts is clearly dominant in Civic Center. While design in a historical style is neither encouraged nor discouraged, the eclectic styles of significant buildings provide a rich architectural vocabulary.

### Policy 2

**Create varied rhythms in developments on large lots by inserting vertical piers/columns, or changes in fenestration and materials to articulate what otherwise would be an undifferentiated facade plane.**

The 50 Vara block subdivision along Van Ness Avenue results in north-south

block lengths of 275 feet. On blocks bisected by alleys the length is commonly 120 feet. Excessive horizontal width without reoccurring vertical elements leads to a repetitive rhythm difficult to comprehend.

### **Policy 3**

**Incorporate setbacks and/or stepping down of building form on new developments – and major renovations when necessary – to increase sun exposure on sidewalks.**

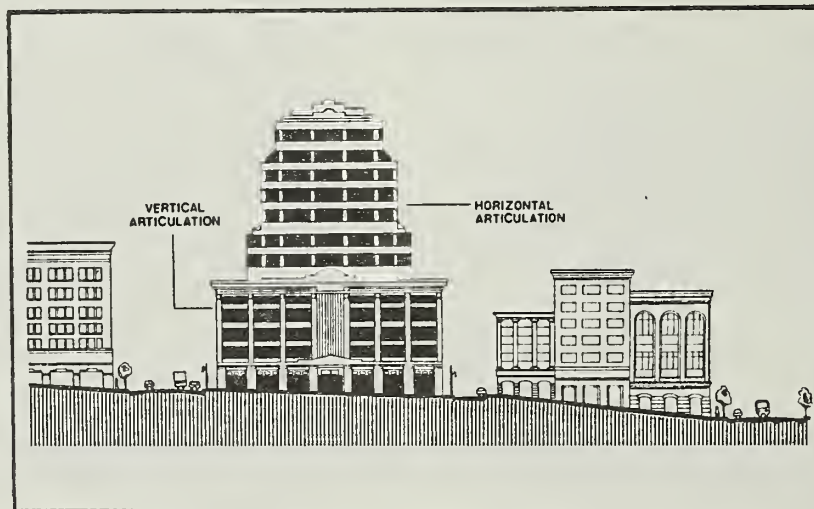
Design features such as setbacks and wind breaks on new developments and renovations can help to provide a pleasant environment on both rooftops, sidewalks, courtyards and nearby open spaces.

between the building and the outside and is especially important at the ground level. A belt course or cornice, change in materials, or other architectural treatment should be required at the 40 to 60 foot height along Austin, Hemlock and Fern Streets for properties with frontage along those minor streets.

### **Policy 5**

**Prohibit bridges over streets or other public right-of-ways.**

Pedestrian bridges block views, shadow streets and other open spaces and obstruct skyline elements while only marginally improving private pedestrian circulation between buildings. Safe and convenient pedestrian circulation at grade is preferred.



### **Policy 4**

**Differentiate bases of buildings and incorporate detail at ground level through variety in materials, color, texture and architectural projections. Provide windows with clear glass throughout the building.**

Defined bases on tall buildings provide opportunities for active ground floor uses, ornament and art, colonnades, arcades and other innovative schemes. Clear glass facilitates visual contact

## **C. RESIDENTIAL LIVABILITY**

### **OBJECTIVE 6**

**PROVIDE SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS WITHIN EACH MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT.**



## **Safety, Security and Privacy**

### **Policy 1**

**Ensure safety, security and privacy within new residential developments while encouraging efficient use of common open space areas.**

Common areas associated with the residential portion of a mixed use development should be designed to prevent intrusion by commercial space users and the general public. Whenever possible, residential parking areas should be physically separated from public parking areas and should provide safe and secure passageway to residential elevators and walkways. Handicapped parking areas should be placed close to elevators and should be free of potential vehicle movement conflicts.

## **Sun, Shade and Wind Protection**

### **Policy 2**

**Provide wind protection and sun exposure to private and common open space areas.**

## **Open Space/Greenspace**

### **Policy 3**

**Generally maintain existing open space requirements for residential use. Allow common open space requirements to be met by a variety of recreation and open space features.**

The requirement of 36 square feet of open space for each dwelling unit should continue to apply. Development of common usable open space could substitute for private open space at a ratio of 1.33 to 1 provided that this space would be for the exclusive use of project residents. Common open space should include such uses as multipurpose rooms to be used for exercise rooms, solaria, recreational facilities, green spaces and open space play areas.

## **Noise**

### **Policy 4**

**Design mixed use developments to create a quiet residential environment with a variety of intimate, personal spaces well insulated from the intrusion of noises from street or commercial activities.**

There are a variety of ways in which the sound coming from Van Ness Avenue can be reduced to create an acceptable acoustic environment for dwellings. Setbacks provided above the commercial street wall can serve as a sound barrier for those units behind the setback. In addition, noise control for interior spaces can be provided through sound-rated windows. Other sound attenuation measures such as deep balconies and solid balcony rails may also be necessary. Bedrooms or whole units can be insulated from noise by solaria which provide not only sound insulation but also usable garden space, and, on the south, solar heating. To encourage their use, solaria should be counted as required private, usable open space if they are designed so that a substantial portion of the window area can be opened to the air.

## **D. STREETScape**

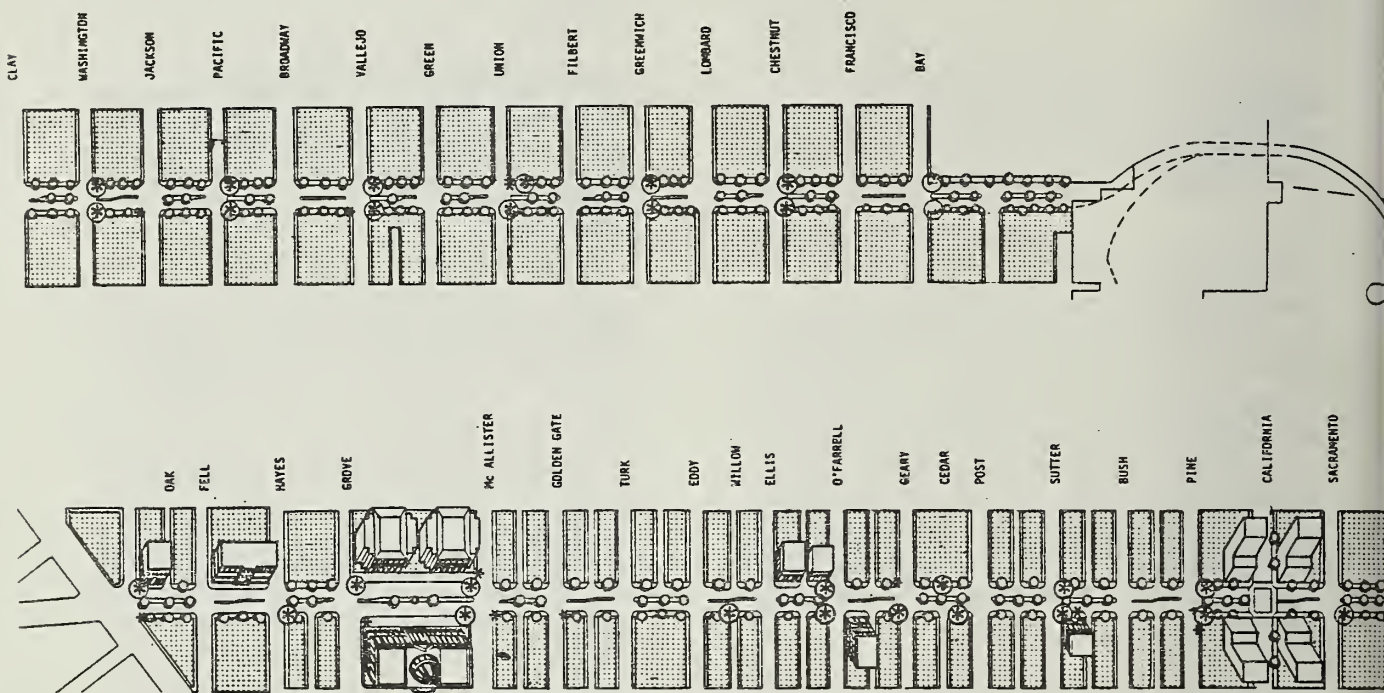
### **OBJECTIVE 7**

**CREATE AN ATTRACTIVE STREET AND SIDEWALK SPACE WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF VAN NESS AVENUE INTO A RESIDENTIAL BOULEVARD.**

## **Plantings**

### **Policy 1**

**Require sponsors of major renovation or new development projects to improve and maintain the sidewalk space abutting their properties according to the guidelines contained in this Plan.**



## LANDSCAPE PLAN

### LEGEND

- TREES
- ⌋ GROUND COVER IN MEDIAN
- ⊗ BUS BULB LOCATION
- \* NEWSRACKS LOCATION

Sidewalk vaults or subsidewalk basements should not be permitted in new developments. Where there are existing sidewalk vaults or subsidewalk basements, project sponsors should be required to install or pay for the installation of subsurface footings, supports or foundations as may be required for future public improvements such as street trees, lights, trolley wire poles, signs, benches, transit shelters, etc. within the vault or sidewalk basement area.

### Policy 2

**Where there are no trees, plant trees within the sidewalk space and the median strip. Maintain existing healthy trees and replace unhealthy ones.**

Trees should be planted on center two feet from the curb, an average of 20 foot spacing along Van Ness Avenue. At major intersections, the trees might be grouped. Trees should be planted within the sidewalk or median space and should be at least four-inch caliper, 10 feet tall, have good taper, and be free of disease and pests.

Appropriate trees for planting in the median strip include Eucalyptus calophylla v. 'Hawkeye', Eucalyptus rudis (Desert Gum), and Eucalyptus polyanthemus (Silver Dollar Gum). Appropriate sidewalk canopy trees include two Lindens, Tilia cordata, and Tilia tomentosa, and Platanus acerifolia, Sycamore.



### Policy 3

**Provide street trees with tree grates that have removable sections to adequately accommodate tree growth.**

The design of the tree grates should be uniform throughout the length of the street.

### Policy 4

**Incorporate low-growing ground cover around the tree plantings within the median strip.**

Shrubs or hedges growing to a maximum height of three feet should be planted in addition to or in lieu of ground cover within the median strip. Ground cover species could include Agapanthus africanus (Ily of the Nile), Dwarf Ily of the Nile, as well as colorful Gazania, consistent with other plantings in the median along Van Ness.

### Sidewalk Treatment

#### Policy 5

**Maintain existing sidewalk widths.**

#### Policy 6

**Incorporate uniform sidewalk paving material, color, pattern and texture throughout the length of the Avenue.**

Sidewalk and median strip paving materials should be concrete, light grey-tone in color, with a plain, brushed surface texture, except for a darker grey 12-inch curbside trim which should add a richness in color and texture to the Avenue.

#### Policy 7

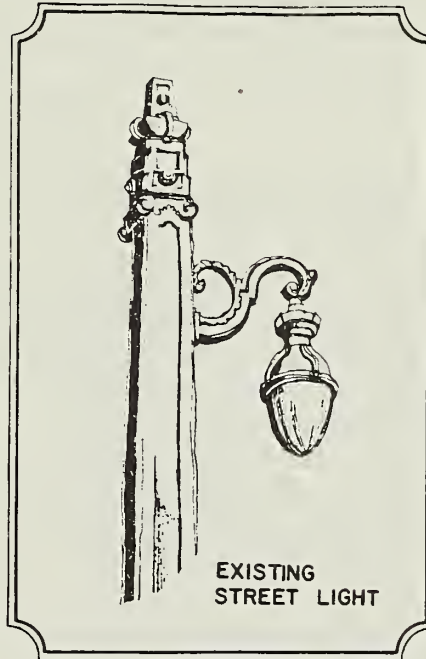
**Trim sidewalk curbs with hydraulically pressed, pre-cut four-inch square stone paving blocks to a horizontal depth of 12 inches. Replace median pavements with grey tone interlocking paving blocks.**

The stone pavers should be of a complementary medium grey-tone color (e.g., Hanover Prest Paving R.D. No. 4).

### Street Lighting

#### Policy 8

**Assure a uniform architectural style; character and color in the design of street lights and poles.**



Painting all the light poles along Van Ness Avenue a blue and gold color scheme, similar to that of the Civic Center light poles, would contribute to this special identity.

If feasible, existing street light poles should be maintained and enhanced in order to contribute to the special identity of the Avenue. The angle and color of illumination on existing and new street lights should be designed to minimize glare to nearby residential uses.

Lighting should not damage adjacent landscape plantings and should provide safe and attractive lighting for pedestrians.

## Street Furniture

### Policy 9

**Provide attractive street furniture at convenient locations and intervals throughout the length of the street.**

New bus shelters or replacement shelters should be placed between the trees along the treeline of the sidewalk. Benches should be attached to the ground and located between the trees along the treeline of the sidewalk adjacent to bus stops.

### Policy 10

**Cluster Newspaper racks at specific corner locations.**

News racks should be fixed to the ground and not attached to utility poles, or other street furniture; racks should not, as a clustered group, exceed six feet in length; and should provide an adequate visual clear zone at intersections for motorists' turning movements and adequate space within the sidewalk for free flow pedestrian circulation.

Newspaper racks should be clustered only at the intersections in the sidewalk space at the following locations along Van Ness Avenue and would not be allowed elsewhere.

#### WESTSIDE

#### EASTSIDE

South of Geary	North of McAllister
North of Pine	North of Golden Gate
South of Jackson	South of Geary
North of Union	North of Sutter
	South of Vallejo

## Signs

### Policy 11

**Permit general advertising signs, business signs and other identifying signs. Permitted signs should meet the following design criteria.**

- a) Signs should not feature any flashing, blinking, fluctuating or otherwise animated light. Likewise, signs should not feature any moving parts.
- b) Wall signs shall not be less than 10 feet above grade and should not be higher than 45 feet above grade and should not be higher than the lowest residential window sill.
- c) Projecting signs and general advertising signs should not be higher than 36 feet. Projecting signs shall in no case project more than 4 feet over the sidewalk.
- d) General advertisement signs should conform to State Outdoor Advertisement regulations requiring that no advertising display shall be placed within 100 feet from another advertising display.
- e) Signs should not be placed in front of windows.

## E. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

### OBJECTIVE 8

**PROVIDE SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT AMONG ALL USERS ON VAN NESS AVENUE.**

The Van Ness Avenue right of way performs many functions. It is a primary state highway carrying heavy auto and truck traffic. Two Municipal Railway routes – the 47 and 42 lines – travel most of its length as do Golden Gate transit buses. Appropriate measures are required to make certain this traffic flows smoothly. Measures must also be taken to assure that the sidewalk remains pleasant for the pedestrian and that the street will be as attractive a "front yard" for Van Ness Avenue residents as possible.



## Transit Service

### Policy 1

Reduce conflicts between transit vehicles and other moving and parked vehicles. Aggressively enforce no parking regulations in bus zones.

### Policy 2

Provide clearly visible and readable street signs and bus stop signs to improve the legibility of bus stops for riders within the bus and for pedestrians. Such signage, however, should not overwhelm the design of the landscape/streetscape system. Provide safe and comfortable waiting areas for patrons by using well-directed street lighting and bus shelters.

### Policy 3

Investigate the feasibility of extending the California Street Cable Car line to the Nihonmachi Center via California Street, Webster or Buchanan Street to Sutter Street. Pending such an extension, provide a safe, comfortable and attractive terminus to the line at Van Ness Avenue. Extension of the cable car, if financially feasible, would provide more efficient use of the Cable Car line as a transit system for residents as well as an attractive means of transporting visitors to special places of interest.

### Policy 4

Investigate the feasibility and desirability of creating a MUNI Metro line along the Van Ness Corridor which would connect with a proposed light rail line along the northeastern waterfront.

This would create a loop rail transit line around the northeastern quadrant of the city. Although expensive to construct, a Van Ness subway would improve inter-city and intra-regional transit service and would ease vehicular traffic flow above ground.

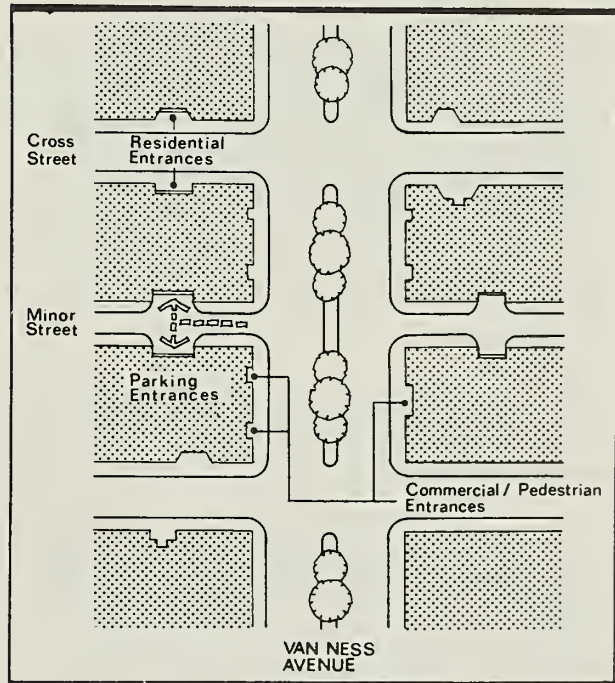
## Auto Circulation

### Policy 5

Whenever feasible, provide access to parking from minor east-west streets. Prohibit new parking access from Van Ness Avenue. For development of lots with no direct access to an east-west street, allow off-site provision of required parking as set forth in Section 159(c) of the Planning Code.

### Policy 6

Prohibit any new drive-up facilities.



### Policy 7

Investigate feasibility of developing Gough Street from Bay Street as a one way couple with Franklin Street.

## Parking

### Policy 8

Require residential parking at a ratio of one parking space per dwelling unit.

## **Policy 9**

**Adopt short-term parking rate structures for existing and new commercial parking resources to discourage commuter parking and provide visitor – shopper parking. Make accessory parking spaces available to the general public for use as short-term day or evening parking whenever possible.**

## **Policy 10**

**Encourage use of upper-story auto storage spaces within existing auto showrooms along Van Ness Avenue as community parking facilities for adjacent projects.**

The use of these spaces for parking could be a highly desirable adaptive re-use of these buildings, a number of which are to be preserved under this Plan. Access to the parking should be from the side streets, not Van Ness.

## **Pedestrian Circulation**

### **Policy 11**

**Improve the efficient and free flowing use of sidewalk space in new development.**

Sidewalk space along Van Ness Avenue is shared by pedestrians, transit patrons, sidewalk elevators, light fixtures, MUNI power poles, traffic signals, newsracks, benches and street trees, and moving vehicles entering or exiting an on-site parking area. Design of sidewalk space associated with new development should reduce clutter and pedestrian obstacles. Existing sidewalk elevators should be removed as quickly as possible and they should be prohibited in new developments. The number of newsracks should be kept to a minimum to improve the free flow of pedestrian activity. Newsracks should be maintained in an attractive fashion.

## **Policy 12**

**Orient building entrances to enhance pedestrian circulation.**

In addition to providing parking access for new developments fronting on Van Ness, the east-west minor streets should provide safe and attractive pathways for pedestrian travel. Major residential entrances should be designed very graciously and should front major east-west streets. Commercial entrances should be featured along Van Ness Avenue.

## **Policy 13**

**Unify the design of trash bins, benches, newsracks, street lighting fixtures, sidewalk surface treatment, canopies, awnings and bus shelters throughout the length of the street.**

## **Freight Loading**

### **Policy 14**

**Discourage access to freight loading facilities from Van Ness Avenue.**

Whenever possible, access to on-site freight loading spaces should be provided from minor or collector streets rather than from major thoroughfares. In instances where commercial uses front on Van Ness Avenue without convenient access to an off-street freight loading facility, priority should be given to allocating existing curb space on nearby east-west collector streets to truck loading zones. No parking rules for bus zones should be strictly enforced.

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## V. OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES FOR CONSERVATION

### A. Preservation of Housing Resources

#### OBJECTIVE 9

#### CONSERVE EXISTING HOUSING RESOURCES.

##### Policy 1

Encourage preservation of existing housing structures unless adequate mitigation measures are initiated.

Existing housing is an important source of affordable housing and rental housing, both of which are important resources to retain. The demolition and conversion of existing housing units would therefore require conditional use authorization from the Planning Commission. In its evaluation of the conditional use application, the Commission would take

into consideration the objectives of this Plan regarding the preservation of existing housing, the Residence Element of the Comprehensive Plan, and all applicable City-wide controls regarding the demolition of existing housing units.

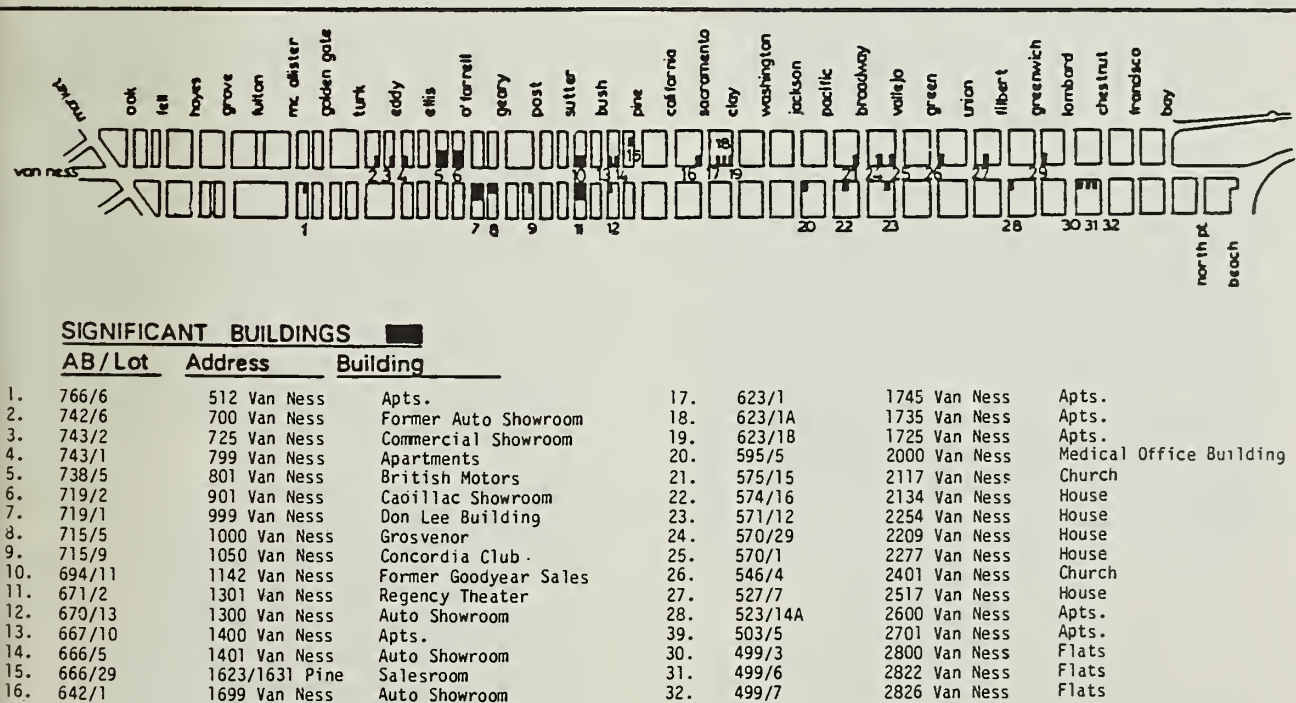
### B. Preservation of Significant Buildings

#### OBJECTIVE 10

#### PRESERVE THE FINE ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF VAN NESS AVENUE.

Van Ness Avenue has been endowed with a number of attractive buildings, mostly older buildings which individually reflect a flavor characteristic of San Francisco's unique architectural style and heritage. Collectively, these buildings contribute to a rich and attractive architectural environment for Van Ness Avenue. The most outstanding of these buildings provide a basis for establishing a theme

Figure 12



and scale for the area's new development. They should be preserved and complemented by new development.

In the course of the economic evolution of the Avenue, it is likely that many of these significant buildings will be converted to other uses. In particular, the function of the street as the auto show room for the city has changed in the recent past and is likely to change even more in the future, with many of the auto agencies relocating. Preservation and adaptive re-use of these rather specialized structures, a number of which are significantly smaller than the allowable zoning envelope of the site, will require flexibility and imagination.

### **Policy 1**

#### **Prevent demolition or inappropriate alteration of architecturally significant buildings.**

Alteration of architecturally significant buildings should be carefully reviewed for conformity with the building-specific guidelines described in this Plan. Demolition should be limited to situations where it is clearly established that the building has been rendered unsafe and unoccupiable and infeasible for rehabilitation for occupancy due to fire, earthquake, flood or similar circumstances, or that substantial and irretrievable physical deterioration has occurred prior to adoption of the Van Ness Avenue Plan.

### **Policy 2**

#### **Allow relaxation of the residential use requirements and of parking requirements for buildings designated as city landmarks.**

In order to give a strong economic incentive to preservation of those architecturally significant buildings along the Avenue which are classified as city landmarks, the conversion of uses in these buildings should be considered for exemption from the mandatory provision of on-site housing. Similarly, the

the conversion of uses in these buildings to office space should be exempted from the provisions of this Plan limiting office uses to an FAR of 1:1. These exemptions are designed to make retention and conversion of buildings classified as city landmark as economically attractive as their demolition and subsequent construction of a mixed-use project conforming to the requirements of this plan.

### **Policy 3**

#### **Encourage architectural integration of new structures with adjacent significant buildings.**

The scale of new buildings – their height, bulk, shape and proportions – should not overwhelm buildings of historic and architectural significance. Designs should harmonize with those buildings by continuing compositional features such as horizontal lines (i.e., belt courses, cornices), window proportions, and overall facade divisions. While the use of color, materials and detailing should not draw unnecessary attention and create conflict with significant buildings, choices for stylistic treatment are to be left flexible.

### **PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS**

Van Ness Avenue is endowed with a number of architecturally rich and attractive buildings which impart upon the Avenue a special character and identity. Thirty-three buildings have been identified as deserving special consideration.

Although these buildings often share some common classical architectural features, each building is unique in its style and context, and guidelines for preservation of these buildings should be cognizant of each building's special resources and/or constraints. The special features of these buildings and guidelines for their potential adaptive re-use or alteration are briefly described below.



**512 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NW Corner of McAllister Street*  
*(AB 766/6)*

**Continental Court Apartments**

This apartment building echoes the City Hall character in its color, stone finish, composition, its use of oversize French windows with transom (in the bays), its grill work massing the lower part of the windows and in its experience of entry. One proceeds through a skylit, exquisitely detailed colonnade into a surprisingly well- appointed lobby (also skylit) which appears to have retained its original detailing.

No alterations should be permitted above ground floor or to the entry or lobby. No vertical enlargements should be permitted. To be encouraged are

alterations which would bring the ground floor into closer conformity to its original state and a uniform sign treatment appropriate to the building and its location.



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**700 VAN NESS**  
*NE Corner at Turk*  
*(AB 742/6)*

**Commercial Showroom, former business college**

A pleasant two-story structure on a small site, distinguished by the lightness and proportions of its ground level arcade and second level windows, the quality of its decorative details, and the large glass areas of its exterior walls. Its appearance could be much improved by consistent treatment in the ground floor arched openings on both streets as well as with a more sympathetic color scheme.

The amount of solid wall surface is minimal in this building with only light-weight columns separating the arched ground floor openings, a condition which also prevails in the second story windows. The site size would not seem to permit a vertical addition with the kind of setbacks which

would be necessary to maintain the architectural integrity and character of this building. It would be inappropriate to place anything of any weight above the almost tracery-like facades.

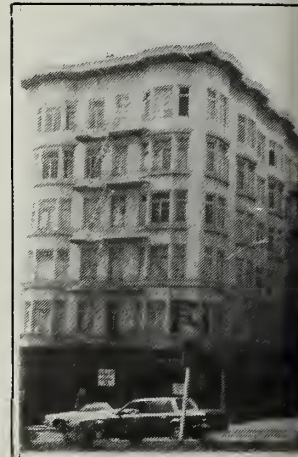
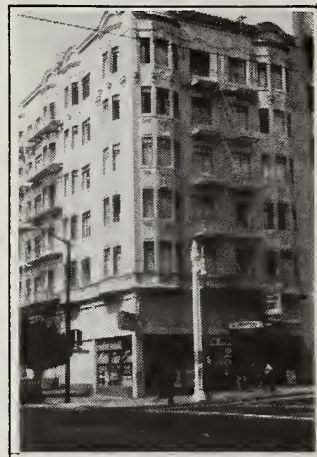


**725 and 801 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*SW Corner of Van Ness at Larch Street*  
*(AB 743/2) and*  
*NW Corner of Van Ness at Eddy*  
*(AB 738/5)*

### **Apartment Buildings**

These are two buildings of five levels of apartments over ground floor commercial space. Both are liberally endowed with slanted bay windows, are architecturally pleasing to the eye, and provide mutual reinforcement when viewed together.

Both structures should be maintained with no exterior alterations to the residential floors and alterations at ground level, compatible with the upper floors, permitted only when necessary to satisfy the commercial needs housed inside.



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**799 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*SW Corner at Eddy Street*  
*(AB 743/1)*

### **Commercial Showroom**

This two-story building is sandwiched (with intervening streets) between moderate-rise apartment buildings -- 725 and 801 Van Ness -- with which it has some commonalities despite the different scale. The chamfered corners at Eddy and Larch Streets reflect the angle of the slanted bay windows in the apartment buildings and the windows here and in 725 are multi-paned.

This building should be retained and preserved. Unless the Larch Street level is used for parking, it might be necessary, if used commercially, to allow some modification to the windows on Van Ness as the existing windows on Van Ness do not permit visibility into the interior.





**901 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NW Corner of O'Farrell Street*  
(AB 719/2)

**British Motors**  
**(originally Packard) Showroom**

The architectural treatment of this building is decisively two-part. The monumental, columned, temple-like showroom facade on Van Ness returns along O'Farrell and Olive for two short bays and then the remainder of the facades on these two streets are industrial in appearance. In the Ellis Street facade, infill glazing between columns is an apparent recent alteration as its counterpart on Olive appears to be the original 1926 multi-paned industrial sash. This building is a designated City Landmark and any alterations would require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City Planning Commission.

Should the building be changed from its present use, the showroom facade on all three streets should be preserved and

restored to its original colors, if not materials. No vertical enlargement should be allowed in this section. The ground floor showroom extends for a greater distance than the exterior facades would suggest. This room should be kept as near to its original design and size as possible as it (and the interior of 1000 Van Ness) represents a most romantic period of California architecture -- the Spanish revival.



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**999 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*SW Corner at O'Farrell Street*  
(AB 719/1)

**Cadillac Showroom**

A rare and outstanding example of a Moderne auto showroom. The building, with its curving corners, powerful horizontal articulation in its sweeping upper-level solid and glass bands, and eccentric piers and pylons, appears to float above a glass base. Evidence suggests that this is the last of auto showrooms expressly built for that purpose on Van Ness. Its construction date was only 10 or 11 years after that of its neighbor, no. 901 across Olive Street, during which time buildings -- as with the merchandise sold therein -- became streamlined.

This building should be preserved. Alterations or additions should not be

allowed to the Van Ness facade or the first two bays to the west. All significant interior features should be preserved intact.



**1000 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NE Corner at O'Farrell Street*  
(AB 715/5)

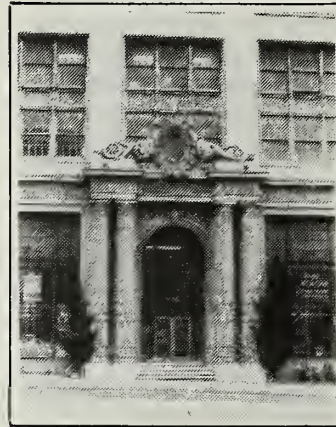
**Don Lee Building**

One of the two great temples to the automobile on Van Ness Avenue and a designated City Landmark. Its base, particularly the entrance, is monumental in scale and execution. The six upper floors, while bearing an excellent relationship to the base, take on architectural significance only when viewed with the base.

The interior fulfills the expectations gleaned from viewing the exterior. Monumentality is achieved and expressed in variations of the California architectural theme of the Spanish revival, also expressed by the cub bears atop columns on the Van Ness facade.

Alterations would require a Certificate of Appropriateness. No alterations should be allowed to the Van Ness facade and the first three bays returning on O'Farrell and Myrtle streets. Interior alterations should preserve the

significant architectural features of the showroom.



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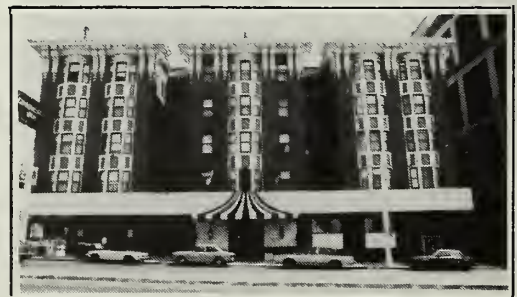
**1050 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*SE Corner at Geary Street*  
(AB 715/9)

**Grosvenor Inn (formerly Richilieu Hotel)**

Boasting an overscaled, intricately detailed cornice, this building is highly compatible in height, bulk and architectural treatment with the buildings to the east, which when taken together comprise about 75% of the block frontage.

No alterations to the exterior should occur above the ground floor. However, the sign band at the first floor level should be removed and replaced with a cornice or some other architectural

feature which would be more sympathetic to the building. Minor alterations to the ground floor are encouraged in order to bring it into closer conformity with its original state and as well as more sympathetic to the upper floors, and which would provide uses and window treatment which are more attractive to the pedestrian.





**1142 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*SE Corner at Post Street*  
(AB 694/11)

**Concordia Club**

Reconstructed following severe fire damage, this classically inspired building bears a closer affinity to Civic Center buildings than to its automobile showroom and hotel neighbors. Nevertheless, it contributes positively to the Avenue's monumental character and identity.



Over a rusticated ground floor facade, the upper two floors are treated as a single unit containing three two-story arched openings flanked by narrow pavilions at either end.

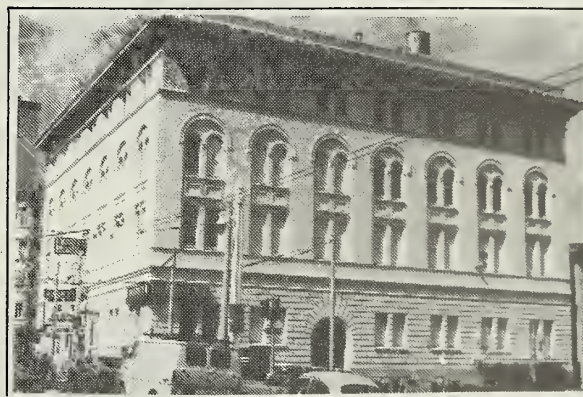
Exterior alterations should not be allowed except those which might bring the uppermost part of the facade back to its probable original state of being capped by a cornice or parapet.

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**1300 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NE Corner at Sutter Street*  
(AB 670/13)

**Regency Theater**

Presently a theater and formerly a fraternal lodge, this building is designed in the manner of an Italian palazzo (which architectural treatment is also given the adjacent building to the east). No alterations to the architectural detailing of the facades should be allowed except as may be necessary at ground level for its continued viability as a commercial structure and to enhance its interaction with the pedestrian.



**1301 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NW Corner at Sutter Street*  
(AB 671/2)

**Commercial Showroom**

A rare architectural style seldom seen in San Francisco, this Secessionist facade provides a high note of interest on Van Ness Avenue. The architectural features along the Van Ness facade and approximately three bays along Sutter Street should be preserved.



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**1400 VAN NESS**  
*NE Corner at Bush Street*  
(AB 667/10)

This is a fine restrained Classical Revival auto showroom with a rusticated base and Corinthian pilasters. The bay and pilaster width relate to the width of the street, with the Van Ness facade having a larger scale than the Bush facade.



Because of the building's corner location it would be difficult to alter or add to without significantly harming its integrity, therefore the building should remain intact.

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**1401 VAN NESS**  
*NW Corner at Bush Street*  
(AB 666/5)

This is a seven story post-fire apartment building. Its facade is richly articulated by bay windows, intact sixth story and roof cornices, and an ornamental fire escape.



Because of its corner location and two architecturally treated facades, it would be difficult to alter or add to without significantly harming its integrity, therefore it should be preserved intact.



### **1415 VAN NESS**

*NW Corner at Austin Street  
(AB 666/4)*

A post-fire auto showroom built around 1909, the building has recently changed use and design. Designed in an Italianate commercial style, the building retains its original bracketed cornice, floral-motif frieze, and the Ionic pilasters. Recent additions to the facade have unfortunately obscured much of the original detailing with fake-marble cladding.

The architectural treatment extends two bays up Austin Street, allowing some flexibility for alterations or additions to the rear of the building.



### **1623 & 1631 PINE STREET**

*South Side of Franklin  
West of Van Ness  
(AB 666/29)*

#### **Commercial Buildings**

These two buildings, not quite twins, were constructed in 1905 (no. 1623) and ca. 1908 (no. 1629) to attract the carriage trade of fashionable Van Ness Avenue and Pacific Heights. Originally the buildings housed Kelly's Stables which offered "fine equipages, livery and boarding stables". By 1911, the buildings housed automobiles. Gradually, however, the buildings assumed other automotive-oriented uses until today, after interior reconstruction and alterations, they are used for offices and the sale of various merchandise.

Both are three stories over basement and intended to be temple-like in their eclecticism in which they preceded their automobile counterparts by a couple of decades.

Architectural embellishments and their arrangement on both facades are similar and in many instances identical. The lower two stories of each are divided, into three parts in no. 1623 and five in no. 1629, by two-story corinthian pilasters. Each center section contains a tympanum above the second floor and an

arched entry at ground level. The uppermost portion of the facade of 1623 appears to have had some of its ornamentation removed.

Both buildings should be maintained and appropriate restoration of 1623 is encouraged.



### **1699 VAN NESS**

*SW Corner at Sacramento Street  
(AB 642/1)*

This building is a four story former auto showroom originally built for the Paige Motor Car Company and is presently in office and retail use. The building is marked by two story arches on the ground level differentiating between the functions of the building. The building has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Because of its corner location, it could not be altered or added to without significantly harming its integrity, and therefore it should remain intact.



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### **1725, 1735, and 1745 VAN NESS**

*Westside, between Sacramento and Clay Streets  
(AB 623/1B, 1A and 1)*

An excellent collection of three Gothic apartment buildings strongly related to each other by the use of similar materials, color, massing, scale, fenestration, bays, cornice and belt lines. 1745 Van Ness is located at the corner of Van Ness and Clay and the Clay facade serves to tie this group to a number of similar apartment buildings on Clay.

The corner building (1745 Van Ness) should be preserved intact. 1725 and 1735 Van Ness could receive minor alterations or additions to the rear without harming their integrity.



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### **2000 VAN NESS AVENUE**

*NE Corner at Jackson Street  
(AB 595/5)*

#### **Medical Arts Building**

A seven story medical office building with ground floor retail use. The base consists of the lower two floors in which paired windows are separated vertically by two-story Corinthian pilasters and separated horizontally by spandrels embellished with bas-relief ornamentation. Above the third floor windows a prominent belt runs the lengths of both facades and a cornice caps the top edge.

Because of its corner location, its present massing and its two highly visible, architecturally outstanding facades, no exterior alterations should occur.





**2117 VAN NESS**  
*SW Corner at Broadway*  
(AB 575/15)

This is an important corner stone church designed in the Romanesque style. It is noteworthy for its entrance arch decoration, corner tower which is an important visual element in the streetscape, and an excellent second story arcade on the eastern facade.

Because of its massing and architectural treatment on four facades, it would be

difficult to alter or add to without significantly harming its integrity, and therefore it should be retained intact.



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**2134 VAN NESS, EASTSIDE**  
*Between Pacific Avenue and Broadway*  
(AB 574/16)

A two story Craftsman style residence converted to offices, with a clinker brick base and half-timber influences in the upper story. The facade is capped by two steep gables.

Because of its small scale, and facade treatment along its north side, it would be difficult to alter or add to without significantly harming its integrity and therefore should be retained intact.



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**2209 VAN NESS**  
*Westside, North of Broadway*  
(AB 570/21)

Located on a small rise and set back from the street, this is a three and a half story Palladian residence with a strongly emphasized central bay consisting of Ionic columns flanking the entrance, a second floor balcony, a Palladian window on the second story and the roof dormer, and an ornate cornice.

Because it is a freestanding structure, it would be difficult to alter or add to

without significantly harming its integrity; the building should therefore remain intact.



**2254 VAN NESS**  
*Eastside, South of Vallejo Street*  
(AB 571/12)

Located on a small rise and visible above a one story building to the north, this is a three-story Victorian residence with stick style influences, a steeply pitched roof, an ornate chimney stack and abundant detailing.

Because of its prominent location, its three architecturally treated facades, and its massing, it would be difficult to

alter or add to without harming its integrity; the building should therefore remain intact



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**2277 VAN NESS**  
*SW Corner at Vallejo Street*  
(AB 570/1)

This is a three and a half story Victorian residence recently converted to commercial use with a two story addition to the rear. The building has a strong presence on the street due to its prominent corner location, its square bay windows on both Van Ness and Vallejo, and a complicated gable roof.

Because of its corner location and two architecturally treated facades, only alterations or additions to the rear of

the building are possible without significant harm to the structure's integrity. Additions to the rear should be kept below the level of the original cornice.



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**2401 VAN NESS**  
*NW Corner at Green Street*  
(AB 456/4)

This is a small scale Byzantine style church with Baroque detailing. The style, massing and central form of the church are unusual in the Bay Area.

Because of its corner location, three architecturally treated facades and massing, it would be difficult to alter or

add to without significantly harming its integrity; the building should therefore remain intact.

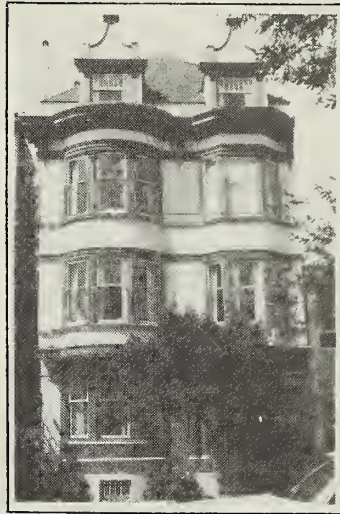




**2517 VAN NESS**  
*Westside, North of Union Street*  
(AB 527/7)

This is a three and a half story Victorian residence with an extremely articulated handling of the facade consisting of round- and three-sided bays, an impressive entrance flanked by double Ionic columns, ornate cornices and belt course, and an unusual treatment of the roof dormers.

Because of massing and scale, the building could not be altered without significant harm to its integrity and it should remain intact.



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**2600 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*Northeast at Filbert*  
(AB 523/14A)

**Apartment Building**

This is a well-proportioned six story apartment building with good detailing throughout its facades. Above the rusticated basement, a belt course follows the plan outline of the facades including including the tiers of bay windows which are separated horizontally by spandrels with bas-relief. A handsome cornice completes the architectural excellence of the building.

Because of its corner location and two architecturally significant facades, no exterior alterations should be permitted.



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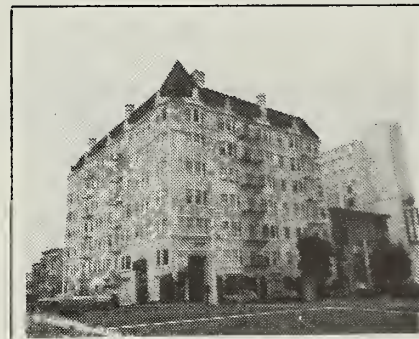
**2701 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NW at Greenwich Street*  
(AB 503/5)

**Apartment Building**

This is a fine Chateau-like seven story apartment building. It is richly decorated with a two story entrance flanked by pilasters, mansard roof, octagonal chimneys and bays.

With its fine design and prominent corner location at the foot of a hill, the

building could not only accept minimal alterations without harming its integrity.



**2800 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*NE Corner at Lombard Street*  
(AB499/3)

This three story Victorian residence forms part of a fine group of pre-fire buildings between Lombard and Chestnut Streets which retain the scale and character of pre-fire Van Ness Avenue. Although two of the five buildings have been altered, the group remains coherent through use of similar scale and massing.

Because of its corner location and two architecturally treated facades, it could

not be altered or added to without significant harm, and therefore it should be retained intact.



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**2822 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*Eastside, North of Lombard Street*  
(AB 499/6)

This is a three and a half story Victorian residence with a simple facade framed by two story pilasters, which is part of the group of pre-fire buildings on this section of Van Ness.

Because it is a freestanding structure, it could not be altered or added to without significant harm, and therefore it should remain intact.



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**2826 VAN NESS AVENUE**  
*Eastside, South of Chestnut Street*  
(AB 499/7)

This is a three story Victorian residence, which is part of the group of pre-fire buildings on this section of Van Ness.

Because it is a free-standing structure, it could not be altered or added to without significant harm, and therefore it should be retained intact.





# Credits

## DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

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Sketches by David Lynch

This Plan is dedicated to the memory of David Lynch and Fred Stuprich

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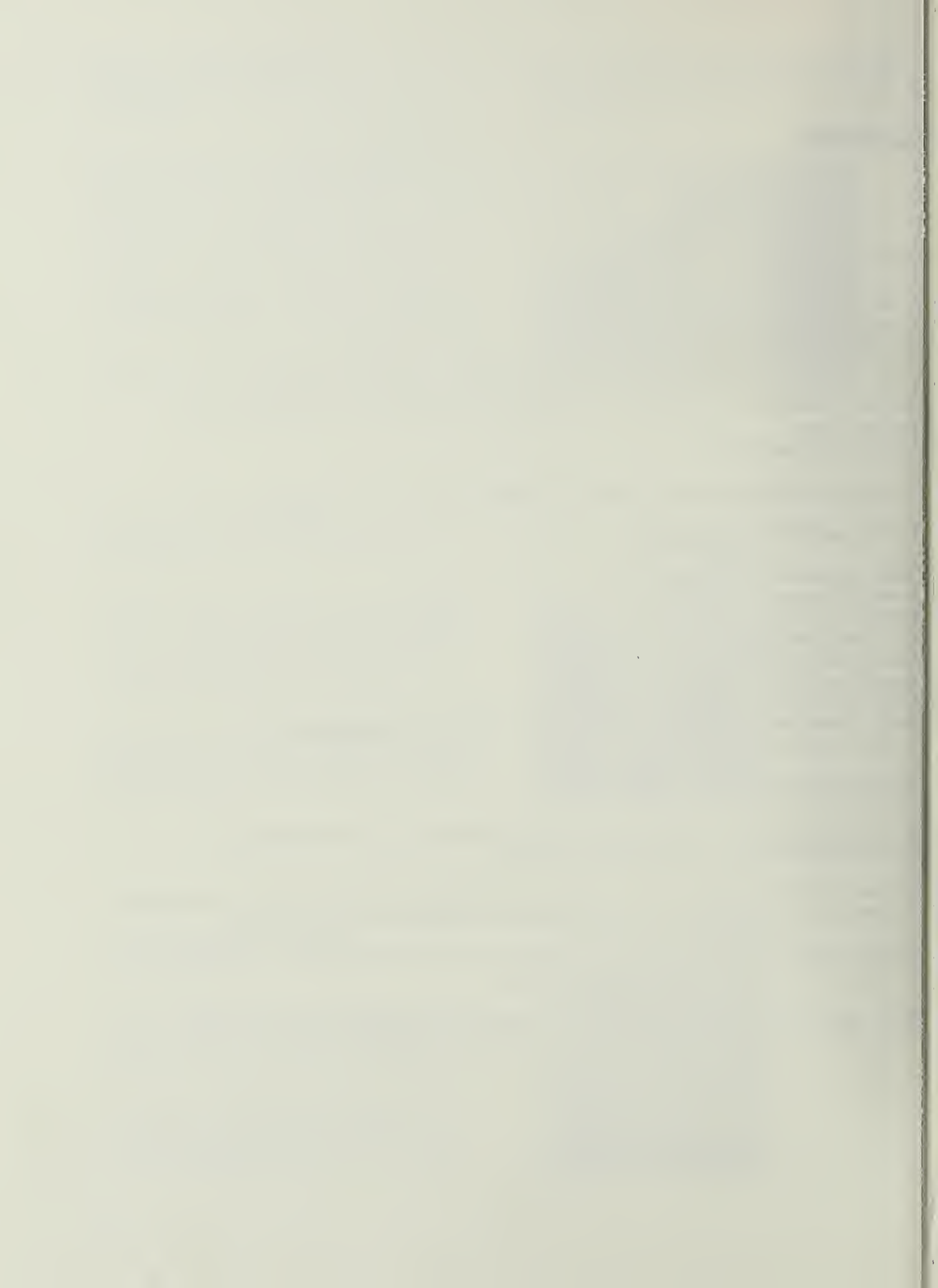
## CONSULTANTS – Special Thanks to:

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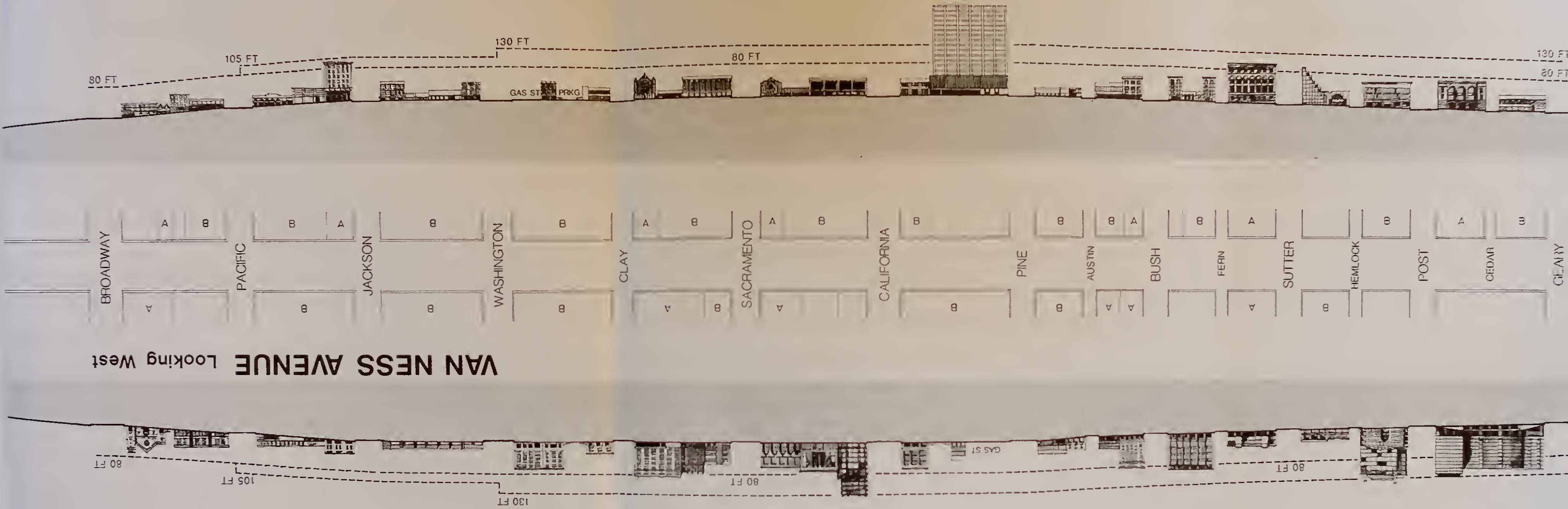
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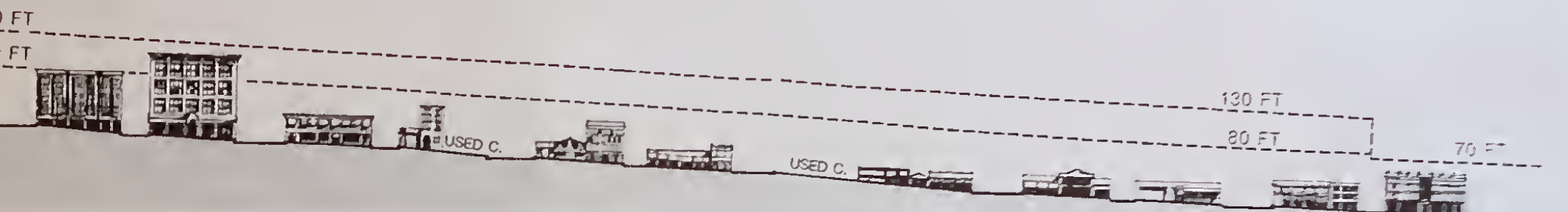




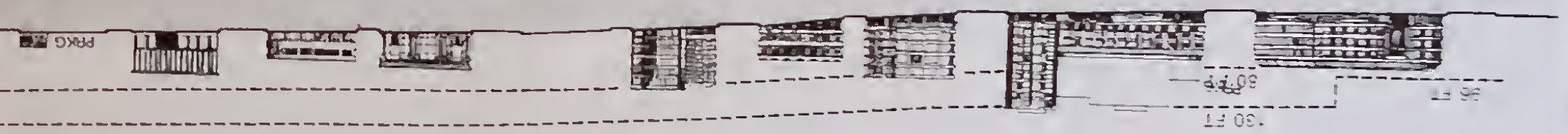
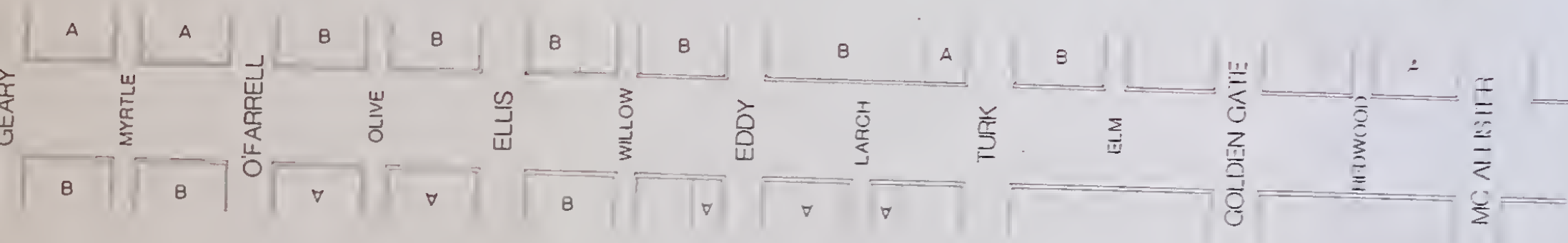
VAN NESS AVENUE Looking West







# VAN NESS AVENUE Looking East



- A Significant Buildings
- B Soft Sites









